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BRIAN ALDISS

FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND

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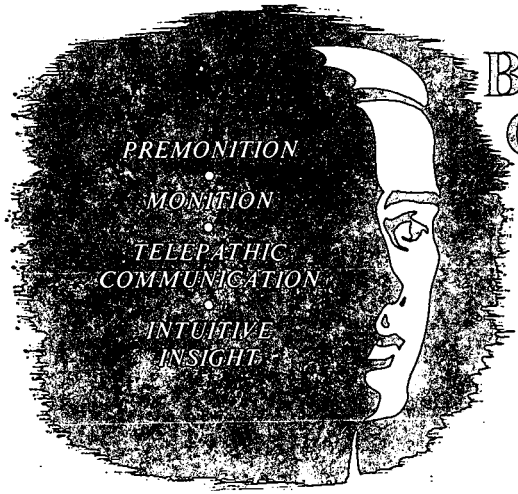

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MARCH, 1974 Vol. 23, No. 3

BRIAN ALDISS'S GREATEST NEW NOVEL

FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND 6

new novelet

THE CITY OF THE CROCODILE
by R. FARADAY NELSON 62

new short stories

HIS LAST AND FIRST WOMEN
by B. ALAN BURHOE 72

AT THE INSTITUTE
by BARRY N. MALZBERG 78

IMAGES
by JERRY MEREDITH 84

THE STATE OF ULTIMATE PEACE
by WILLIAM NABORS 88

SHORT TIME AT THE PEARLY GATES
by DAVID R. BUNCH 95

I'M GOING TO GET YOU
by F. M. BUSBY 98

new features

EDITORIAL by TED WHITE 4

SCIENCE FICTION: A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE
by BRIAN M. STABLEFORD 101

FANTASY BOOKS
by FRITZ LEIBER 111

ACCORDING TO YOU 115

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TED WHITE

editorial

THE BEST-LAID PLANS of mice, men and editors all have a knack for going awry. Last issue, you'll recall, I announced that this issue would lead off with a new short novel by a new, previously unpublished writer, Richard Snead—"The Kozmic Kid." And I also mentioned a new Thongor adventure by Lin Carter.

Don'r bother hunting through the issue just because neither is mentioned on the cover or contents page—they're not to be found here. In fact, the entire original March issue of FANTASTIC—the issue intended to be the one presently in your hands—has been set aside (probably until July), in order to bring you Brian Aldiss's new novel, *Frankenstein Unbound*, which begins this issue and concludes next issue.

Last minute switches like these add grey hairs to an editor's head—but for you, the readership, they are fortunate. Because the Aldiss novel, which came in unexpectedly and at the last minute, marks an important event in the sf world.

The novel will have a special relevancy to readers who recall the Panshins' *SF in Dimension* column in the April, 1972 issue of this magazine. In that column, "The Resurrection of SF—I", the Panshins traced the origins of the use of "science beyond science" (a usage which has fueled modern sf ever since) to Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein, or the New Prometheus*, published in 1818.

In his recently published book-length study of science fiction, *The Billion Year Spree*, Brian Aldiss independantly reaches the same conclusion—that the publication of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* marked the origins of modern-day science fiction. Now, in *Frankenstein Unbound* (the title is a play on *Prometheus Unbound* and thus circularly honors the full title of Mary Shelley's novel), Aldiss not only tells a compelling story interwoven with threads of sf and horror, but provides a work of critical exegisis on *Frankenstein* as a novel. For those of you more familiar with Frankenstein's monster from the many (and increasingly inferior) movies turned out over the past thirty years, the publication of this new novel may be a prod to check out of a copy of Mary Shelley's original book from your

(Cont. on page 125)

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BRIAN ALDISS
FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND

(PART ONE)

Something happened to Joe Bodenland. He found himself in a place where his memory did not serve and his intellect often betrayed him. It was in many respects an idyllic world–until Bodenland found himself held at gunpoint by none other than Lord Byron. This is Brian Aldiss's first science fantasy novel in four years–and his first appearance here since our December, 1970, issue ("Cardiac Arrest"). Here is a novel in the grand tradition–combining terror, beauty, love, excitement, horror, catastrophe, and a final tremendous pursuit–in the course of which you will meet both Mary Shelley, authoress of what is now coming to be considered the first science fiction novel, Frankenstein, *and her chief fictional character, Victor Frankenstein!*

Alas, lost mortal! What with guests like these
Hast thou to do? I tremble for thy sake:
Why doth he gaze on thee, and thou on him?
Ah, he unveils his aspect: on his brow
The thunder-scars are graven: from his eye
Glares forth the immortality of hell. . .

—BYRON: 'Manfred'

Make the beaten and conquered pallid, with brows raised and knit together, and let the skin above the brows be all full of lines of pain; at the sides of the nose show the furrows going in an arch from the nostrils and ending where the eye beings, and show the dilation of the nostrils which is the cause of these lines; and let the teeth be parted after the manner of such as cry in lamentation.

—LEONARDO DA VINCI: Treatise on Painting

Illustrated by MIKE KALUTA

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PART ONE

I.

Letter from Joseph Bodenland
to his Wife, Mina
New Houston, 20th August, 2020

MY DEAREST MINA,

I will entrust this to good old mail services, since I learn that CompC, being much more sophisticated, has been entirely disorganised by the recent impact-raids. What has not? The headline on today's Still is: SPACE/TIME RUPTURED, SCIENTISTS SAY. Let us only hope the crisis will lead to an immediate conclusion of the war, or who knows where we shall all be in six months' time!

But to more cheerful things. Routine has now become reestablished in the house, although we still all miss you sorely (and I most sorely of all). In the silence of the empty rooms at evening, I hear your footfall. But the grandchildren keep the least corner occupied during the day. Nurse Gregory is very good with them.

They were so interesting this morning when they had no idea I was watching. One advantage about being a deposed presidential advisor is that all the former emotions may now be used simply for pleasure. I have to admit I am becoming quite a voyeur in my old age; I watch the children intensely. It seems to me that, in this world of madness, theirs is the only significant activity.

Neither Tony nor Poll have mentioned their parents since poor Molly and Dick were killed; perhaps their sense of loss is too deep, though there is no sign of that in their play. Who knows? What adult can understand what goes on in a child's mind? This morning, I suppose, there was some morbidity. But the game was inspired by a slightly older girl, Doreen, who came round here to play. You don't know Doreen. Her family are refugees, very nice people from the little I have seen of them, who have arrived in Houston since you left for Indonesia.

Doreen came round on her scouter, which she is just about old enough to drive, and the three of them went to the swimming pool area. It was a glorious morning, and they were all in their swimsuits.

Even little Poll can swim now. As you predicted, the dolphin has been a great help, and both Poll and Tony adore her. They call her Smiley.

The children had a swim with Smiley. I watched for a while and

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then struggled with my memoirs. But I was too anxious to concentrate; Sec. of State Dean Reede is coming to see me this afternoon and frankly I am not looking forward to the meeting. Old enemies are still old enemies, even when one is out of office—and I no longer derive pleasure from being polite!

When I looked in on the children again, they were very busy. They had moved to the sand area—what they call the Beach. You can picture it: the grey stone wall cutting the leisure area off from the ranch is now almost hidden by tall hollyhocks in full bloom. Outside the changing huts are salvia beds, while the jasmines along the colonnade are all in flower and very fragrant, as well as noisy with bees. It is a perfect spot for children in a dreadful time like the present.

The kids were burying Doreen's scouter! They had their spades and pails out, and were working away with the sand, making a mound over the machine. They were much absorbed. No one seemed to be directing operations. They were working in unison. Only Poll was chattering as usual.

The machine was eventually entirely buried, and they walked solemnly round it to make sure the last gleaming part was covered. After only the briefest discussion, they dashed away to different parts of the area to gather things. I saw their little brown bodies multiplied on the various screens as I called more and more cameras into action. It looked as if the whole world was tenanted by little lissom savages—an entirely charming illusion!

They came back to the grave time and time again. Sometimes they brought twigs and small branches snapped off the sheltering acacias, more often flower-heads. They called to each other as they ran.

Nurse Gregory had the morning off, so they were playing entirely alone.

You may recall that the cameras and microphones are concealed mainly in the pillars of the colonnade. I was not picking up what the children were saying very well because of the constant buzzing of bees in the jasmine—how many secrets of state were saved by those same insects?! But Doreen was talking about a Feast. What they were doing, she insisted, was a Feast. The others did not question what she said. Rather, they echoed it in excitement.

"We'll load on lots of flowers and then it will be a huge, huge Feast," I heard Poll say.

I gave up work and sat watching them. I tell you, theirs seemed the only meaningful activity in the crazy warring world. And it was inscrutible to me.

Eventually, they had the grave covered with flowers. Several branches of acacia were embedded on top of the mound, which was otherwise studded with big hollyhock flowers, crimson, mauve, maroon, yellow, scarlet, with an odd orange head of salvia here and there, and a bunch of blue

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cornflowers that Poll picked. Then round the grave they arranged smaller twigs.

The whole thing was done informally, of course. It looked beautiful.

Doreen got down on her knees and began to pray. She made our two solemn grandchildren do likewise.

"God bless you, Jesus, on this bright day!" she said. "Make this a good Feast, in Thy name!"

Much else she said which I could not hear. The bees were trying to pollinate the microphones, I do believe. But chiefly they were chanting, "Make this a good Feast, in Thy name!" Then they did a sort of hopping dance about the pretty grave.

You must wonder about this unexpected outbreak of Christianity in our agnostic household. I must say that at first it caused me some regret that I have for so long stifled my own religious feeling in deference to the rationalism of our times—and perhaps partly in deference to you, whose innocent pagan outlook I always admired and hopelessly aspired to. As far as I know, Molly and Dick never taught their children a word of prayer! Perhaps the traditional comforts of religion were exactly what these orphans needed. What if those comforts are illusions? Even the scientists are saying that the fabric of space/time has been ruptured and reality—whatever that may be—is breaking down!

I need not have worried overmuch. The Feast ceremony was basically pagan, the Christian formulae mere frills. For the dance the children did among their plucked flowers was, I'm sure, an instinctual celebration of their own physical health. Round and round the grave they went! Then the dance broke up in rather desultory fashion, and Tony popped his penis out of his trunks and showed it to Doreen. She made some comment, smiling, and that was that. They all ran and jumped into the pool again.

When the gong sounded for lunch and we all assembled on the verandah, Poll insisted on taking me to look at the grave.

"Grampy, come and see our Feast!"

They live in myth. Under the onslaught of school, intellect will break in—crude robber intellect—and myth will wither and die like the bright flowers on their mysterious grave.

And yet that isn't true. Isn't the great overshadowing belief of our time—that ever-increasing production and industrialisation bring the greatest happiness for the greatest number all round the globe—a myth to which most people subscribe? But that's a myth of Intellect, not of Being, if such distinction is permissible.

I'm philosophising again. One of the reasons they chucked me out of the government!

Dean Reede arrives soon. My just deserts, some would say. . .

Write soon.

Ever your loving husband,

Joe

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P.S. I enclose a still of the Leader in today's London "Times". Despite the measured caution of its tone, there's much in what it says.

II.

Times First Leader,
20th August, 2020
DEADLY RELATIONSHIPS

WESTERN SCIENTISTS are now in general although not entire accord—for even in the domain of science opinion is rarely unanimous—that mankind is confronted with the gravest crisis of its existence, a crisis which not to survive is not to survive at all.

Crises which, in prospect, appear uniquely ominous have a habit of assuming family resemblances in retrospect. We observe that they were critical but not conclusive. To say this is not to be facetious. Professor James Ransome's comment in San Francisco yesterday brought a sense of porportion to the increasingly alarmist news of the instability of the infrastructure of space—a sense of proportion particularly welcome to that large general public unaware until a fortnight ago that there was such a thing as an infrastructure of space, let alone that nuclear activity might have rendered it unstable. The professor's remark that the present instability represents, in his words, "the great grey ultimate in pollution" should remind us that the world has survived serious pollution scares for over fifty years.

However, there are sound reasons for regarding our present crisis as nothing less than unique. All three opposed sides in the war, Western, South American and Third World Powers, have been using nuclear weapons of increasing calibre within the orbits of the Earth-Luna system. Nobody has gained anything, unless one includes the doubtful benefit of having destroyed the civilian Moon colonies, but the general feeling has been one of relief that these weapons were used above rather than below the stratosphere.

Such relief, we now see, was premature. We are learning yet another bitter lesson on the indivisibility of Nature. We have long understood that sea and land formed an interrelated unit. Now—far too late, according to Professor Ransome and his associates—we perceive a hitherto undiscerned relationship between our planet and the infrastructure of space which surrounds and supports it. The infrastructure has been destroyed, or at least damaged, to the point at which it malfunctions unpredictably, and we are now faced with the consequences. Both time and space have gone 'on the blink', as the saying has it. We can no longer rely even on the sane sequence of temporal progression; tomorrow may prove to be last week, or last century, or the Age of the Pharaohs. The Intellect has made our planet unsafe for intellect. We are suffering from the curse that was Baron Frankenstein's in Mary Shelley's novel: by seeking to control too much, we have lost

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control of ourselves.

Before we go down in madness, the most terrible war in history, largely an irrational war of varying skin-tones, must be brought to an immediate halt. If the plateau of civilization, on to which mankind climbed with such long exertion, now has to be evacuated, let us at least head away into the darkness in good order. We should be able to perceive at last (and that phase 'at last' now contains grim overtones) that, as the relationship between space, planets, and time is more intimate and intricate than we had carelessly imagined, so too may be the relationship between black, white, yellow, red, and all the flesh-tones in between.

III.

Letter from Joseph Bodenland to his wife, Mina
New Houston, 22nd August, 2020

MY DEAREST MINA,

Where were you yesterday, I wonder? The ranch, with all its freight of human beings—in which category I include those supernatural beings, our grandchildren—spent yesterday and much of the day before in a benighted bit of somewhere that I presume was medieval Europe! It was our first taste of a major Timeslip (how easily one takes up the protective jargon—a Timeslip sounds no worse than a landslide. But you know what I mean—a fault in the spatial infrastructure.)

Now we are all back here in The Present. That term, 'The Present' must be viewed with increasing suspicion as Timeslips increase. But you will understand that I mean the date and hour shown unflinchingly on the calendar-chronometer here in my study. Are we lucky to get back? Could we have remained adrift in time? One of the most terrifying featues of this terrifying thing is that so little is understood about it. And in no time at all—I wrote down the phrase unthinkingly—there may be no chance for men of intellect to compare notes.

I can't think straight. Don't expect a coherent letter. It is an absolute shock. The supreme shock outside death. Maybe you have experienced it. . . Of course I am wild with anxiety about you. Come home at once, Mina! Then at least we shall be among the Incas or fleeing Napoleon *together*! Reality is going to pot. One thing's for sure—we never had as secure a grasp on reality as we imagined. The only people who can be laughing at the present are yesterday's nutcases, the parapsychologists, the junkies, the ESP-buffs, the reincarnationists, the science-fiction writers, and anyone who never quite believed in the homogeneous flow of time.

Sorry. Let me stick to facts.

The ranch got into a timeslip (there's more than one: ours does not merit a capital T). Suddenly we were back—wherever it was.

Sec. of State Dean Reede was with me at the time. I believe I told

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you last letter that he was coming to see me. Of course, he is firmly in the President's pocket—a Glendale man every inch of him, and as tough as Glendale, as we always knew. He says they will never cease the fight; that all history gives inescapable precedents to how an inferior culture must go down to a superior one. Gives as examples the destruction of Polynesia, the obliteration of the Amazon Indians.

I told him that there was no objective way of judging which side was inferior, which superior: that the Polynesians seemed to have maximised happiness, and that the Indians of the Amazon seemed to be in complete and complex harmony with their environment. That both goals were ones our culture had failed to achieve.

Reede then called me a soft-head, a traitorous liberal (of course I had our conversation played in tape-memory, knowing he would be doing as much). He said that many of the Western Powers' present troubles could be blamed on me, because I pursued such a namby-pamby role while acting as presidential advisor. That I should have known that my minor reforms in police rule, housing, work permits, etc., would lead to black revolt. Historically, reform always led to revolt. Etc.

A thoroughly useless and unpleasant argument, but of course I had to defend myself. And I remain sure that history, if there is to be any, will vindicate me. It will certainly have little good to say for Glendale and his hatchetmen. He even had the gall to instance our private picture gallery as an example of my wrong-headness!

We had got to shouting at each other when the light changed. More than that—the texture of the atmosphere changed. The sky went from its usual washed blue to a dirty grey. There was no shock or jar —nothing like an earth-tremor. But the sensation was so abrupt that both Reede and I ran to the windows.

It was amazing. Cloud was rolling in overhead. Over the plain, coming in fast, was thick mist. In a few moments, it surged over the wall like a sea and burst all over the garden and patio!

And not only that. Ahead, I could see the land stretching as usual, and the low roofs of the old stables. But beyond the roofs, the hills had gone! And to the left, driveway and pampas grass had disappeared. They were replaced by a lumpy piece of country, very green and broken and dotted with green trees—like nowhere in Texas.

"Holy saints! We've been time-slipped!" Reede said. Dazed though I was, I thought how characteristic of him to speak as if this was some personal thing that had been done to *him*. No doubt that was exactly how he saw it.

"I must go to my grandchildren," I said.

With shrill shouts, Poll and Tony were already running outside. I caught up with them and held their hands, hoping I might be able to

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protect them from danger. But there was no danger except that most insidious one, the threat to human sanity. We stood there, staring into the mist. Nurse Gregory came out to join us, taking everything with her usual unflustered calm.

When a few minutes had passed, and we were recovering from our first shock, I stepped forward, towards where the drive had been.

"I'd stay where I was, if I was you, Joe," Reede advised. "You don't know what might be out there."

I ignored him. The children were straining to go ahead.

There was a clean line where our sand ended. Beyond it was rank grass, growing as high as the children's knees, and beaded silver with rain. Great shaggy oaks stood everywhere. A path was worn among them.

"I can see a hut over there, Grampy," Tony said, pointing.

It was a poor affair, built of wood. It had wooden slates on the roof. Behind it was an outhouse, also wooden, and a picket fence, with bushes by it. With an increase in unease, I saw that two people, I thought a man and a woman, stood behind the fence, staring in our direction. I pointed them out to the children.

"Better get back in the house," Reede advised. "I'm going to phone the police and see what the hell's happening." He disappeared.

"They won't hurt us, will they?" said Tony, staring across at the two strangers.

"Not unless we threaten them," Nurse Gregory said—which I thought was a little optimistic.

"I should imagine they're as startled by us as we are by them," I said.

Suddenly, the man by the fence turned away and went behind the house. When we next saw him, he was running into the distance, heading uphill. The woman slid out of sight and went into the house.

"Let's have a walk round, Grampy, can we?" Tony said. "I'd love to go to the top of that hill and see where the man went. Perhaps there's a castle over there."

It seemed a likely suggestion, but I was not too anxious to leave the relative shelter of our house. I recalled that I had an old-fashioned Colt .45 automatic pistol in my desk; yet the idea of carrying it was repugnant to me. The children kept plaguing me to take them forward. Eventually I gave in. The three of us walked together under the trees, leaving Nurse Gregory to stand on the house side of the danger line!

"Don't go too far!" she called. So she had some sensations of fear!

"No harm will come to us," I replied. I figured I could outoptimism her when need be!

Well, no harm came to us, but I was in a constant state of worry. Supposing the house snapped back to 2020, leaving us stuck in whatever benighted neck of the woods we had come across. Or supposing—I'm ashamed to put on paper now—something dreadful came and attacked us, something

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we didn't know about!

And there was a third worry, shadowy but no more pleasant for that. Supposing that what was happening was just a subjective phenomenon, something going on purely inside my own skull! It was hard to believe that we weren't in a kind of dream.

The kids wanted to go and see if they could see the woman in the wooden house. I made them walk the other way. There was a dog lying inside the picket fence. I had a dread about trying to talk to anyone from—this world, or whatever you should call it.

Poll was the first to see the horseman.

He was riding over the brow of one of the nearby hillocks, accompanied by a man on foot, who held the stirrup with one hand and led a large hound on a leash with the other. They approached slowly, warily, and were still some distance away. All the same, they looked determined; the man on the horse was dressed in tunic and tight trousers, but he held a short sword in his hand and wore a curving helmet.

"Pretend you haven't seen them, and we'll walk back to the house," I said.

Hypocrite! But for the dear children, I would have gone forward to meet him.

The children came along meekly, Poll putting her small hand in mine. Neither of them looked back. We got to the front door, stood on the step and then looked back.

The horseman and his companion came steadily on. The dog strained on its leash. All three of them kept their eyes fixedly on us. When they reached the line where the grass ended and the Texan ground began, they halted.

The horse was a poor spavined creature. The man on the horse looked rather grand. He had a beard and steady dark eyes. His hair and complexion were dark. His attitude was easy in the saddle and expressed determination. The man by his side—I judged it to be the peasant from the wooden house—was a stocky creature whose bodily gestures suggested unease.

"Who are you? Do you speak English?" I called.

They just stared back.

"Are you from New Houston?" Tony called bravely.

They made no verbal answer. Instead, the man on horseback raised his sword aloft. In greeting or threat? Then he turned the nag around and, almost sadly, I thought, led back the way he had come.

"I told you they wouldn't hurt us," Nurse Gregory said, giving me a look of relief.

Tony called once, but they did not turn back, and we watched them until both had disappeared over the brow of the little hill.

You will think this thrilling tale ends in an awful anti-climax, my dear, and be glad that it is so. We never saw those men again. We remained in that timeslip for thirty-five hours or thereabouts, but saw no one else approach.

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My anxiety was that the horseman had gone to get reinforcements. Perhaps there was a castle nearby, as Tony had immediately assumed. I summoned the three robot servants and reprogrammed them to keep watch—fortunately, I had a defence programme to hand. Reede and I reinforced their watch from time to time, especially during the night, when we also floodlit the house and grounds. I should say that our phones to the outside world were non-functioning but of course the nuclear core supplied us with all the power we needed.

During the night, we heard dogs barking and yapping in the hills. Maybe there were jackals as well. That was all.

This morning, we flipped back into The Present as easily and quietly as we had left it. Here we are, as before—except that the area which returned is not entirely the area which went! I rode round in the buggy this morning, after a brief nap, surveying the damage. Nurse Gregory brought the children along and made an outing of it.

You remember what we call the green cottage—the apple store, beyond the garaging. It has gone. In its place, rough green pasture which will soon wilt in our Texan sun. And where the driveway was we have a line of massive oaks and beeches. The robots are working to clear way between them to the road. Luckily, the road gate is still there—it stayed in 2020 all the while, or so we must assume.

I'm getting one of the oaks sawn down and will despatch it with soil samples to the Historical Ecology Department at the University. Sitgers there might be able to discover something of its original locality from analysis, though he will never have faced a problem like this before. Where did we go? England? Europe? Balkans? The guy on the horse was Caucasian. What time was it, what century? I presume it was Earth. Or was it some alternate Earth? Did I stand with the kids on some possible Earth where the year was 2020 and the Industrial Revolution never happened? Am I sheer blind cracked to ask such questions?

When does the next timeslip strike?

You must come back, my dear Mina, if you can get, war or no war. The war must inevitably fall apart if this schism in the fabric of space/time continues. Come back! The children need their grandmother.

At such a time, I must invoke God and say, God knows, *I* need you!

Your ever-loving husband,
Joe

IV.

CompC Cable from Nurse Gregory to Mrs. Mina Bodenland
New Houston, 25th August, 2020

GREATLY REGRET ANNOUNCE DISAPPEARANCE MR. JOSEPH BODENLAND DURING BRIEF TIMESLIP DAWN THIS MORNING DURATION TWENTY-FIVE MINUTES STOP POLICE

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ARE SEARCHING AREA WITH NEGATIVE RESULTS STOP CHILDREN DISTRESSED AND ASKING FOR YOU STOP PLEASE INSTRUCT URGENT AND RETURN NEW HOUSTON URGENT STOP NURSE SHEILA GREGORY

CMPC1535 0825 901AA593 C144

V.

Extract from W. Central Telecable Record of Conversation over open phone between Mrs. Mina Bodenland and Nurse Sheila Gregory

I HOPE TO be with you by 1030 tomorrow morning, your time, if there are no delays in flight schedules, as there well may be. Just give me the details of my husband's disappearance again, will you, Nurse?"

"Sure. It's as I said before. The timeslip took place at oh-six-forty this morning. It woke me up and it woke Mr. Bodenland up, but the children stayed asleep. I met him in the hall, and he said, 'There's a lake with mountains behind right outside—' I'd already seen it from my bedroom. Snow on the mountains and a road by the lake with a coach being pulled along by two horses."

"And my husband went out alone?"

"He insisted I stayed indoors. I went to the living room and saw him drive the Felder out of the garage. He drove into the new landscape. There was no road, just pasture, and he went very slowly. Then I couldn't see him any more for a clump of trees—a wood, I guess it was. I was anxious."

"Couldn't you have persuaded him to stay indoors?"

"He was determined to go, Mrs. Bodenland. You see, my guess is that he figgered this timeslip would have the same duration as the last one—a day and a half. Maybe he thought he'd just drive to the lake and find out where it was—it was a much pleasanter looking place than the other dump, where the guy on the horse came to stare at us. I went off to fix myself a coffee and just as I was coming back, I was entering the living room and—wham!—the timeslip ceased, just like that, and everything went back to normal. I ran out and called your husband's name but it was no good."

"Twenty-five minutes, you say?"

"That was all. I came back inside and phoned the police, and then I cabled you. Tony and Polly were real upset when they woke up. They've been crying for you and their Mummy all day, on and off."

"Tell them I'm on my way home. And please keep them indoors. You've probably heard —organisation is breaking down. The world's going plain crazy. Keep the robots programmed for defence."

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PART TWO

The Tape-Journal of Joseph Bodenland

I.

A RECORD MUST BE KEPT, for the sanity of all concerned. Luckily, old habits die hard, and I had my tape-memory stowed in the car, together with a stack of other junk. I'll start from the time that darkness came on.

I'd managed to drive over the terrible roads to a village or small town. When I saw buildings coming up, I drove the Felder off the track behind an outcrop of rock, where I hoped it was both safe and unobtrusive for the night. However much of a challenge the town presented, I figured I would cause less stir if I went in on foot than in a four-wheeled horseless vehicle. They did not possess such things here, that was for sure.

All I had had to eat was some chocolate Tony had left in the car, washed down by a can of beer in the freeze compartment. My need for a meal and bed overcame my apprehensions.

Although I had kept away from people and villages so far, I knew this was a well inhabited part of the world. I had seen many people in the distance. The scenery was alpine, with broad green valleys surmounted by mountain peaks. More distantly were higher peaks, tipped with snow. The bottoms of the valleys contained dashing streams, winding tracks, and picturesque little villages made of pretty wooden houses huddling together. Every village had its church spire; every hour was signalled by a bell chiming in the spires; the sound came clear down the valleys. The mountainsides were strewn with spring flowers. There were cows among the tall grasses—cows with solemn bells about their necks which donged as they moved. Above them, little wooden huts were perched in higher meadows.

It was a beautiful and soothing place. It just was not anything you might encounter in Texas, not if you went back or forward a million years. But it looked mighty like Switzerland.

I know Switzerland well, or did on my own time track.

My years in the American Embassy in Bonn had been well spent. I learnt to speak German fluently, and had spent as much leave as I could travelling about Europe. Switzerland had become my favourite country. At one time, I had bought a chalet just outside Interlaken.

So I walked into the town. A board on the outskirts gave its name as Secheron and listed times of Holy Mass. Overhanging balconies, neat piles of kindling wood against every wall. A rich aroma of manure and wood smoke, pungent to my effete nostrils. And a sizeable inn which, with antique lettering, proclaimed itself to be The Hotel Dejean. The exterior was studded with horns and antlers of deer.

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What gave me a thrill—why, outside the low door, two men were unloading something from a cart; it was the carcass of a bear! I had never seen that before. What was more, I could understand what the men were saying; although their accents were strange, their German was perfectly comprehensible.

As soon as I entered a cheerful low room with oil lamps burning, I was greeted by the host. He asked me a lot of suspicious questions, and eventually I was shown to what must have been the poorest room in his house, over the kitchen, facing a hen-run. It mattered not to me. A servant girl brought me up water, I washed and lay back on the bed to rest before dinner. I slept.

When I woke, it was without any idea of time. The timeslip had upset my circadian rhythms. I knew only that it was dark, and had been for some while. I lay there in a sort of wonderment, listening to a rich world of sound about me. The great wooden chalet creaked and resonated like a galleon in full sail. I could hear the voices of the wood, and human voices, as well as snatches of song and music. Somewhere, cowbells sounded; the animals had been brought in for the night, maybe. And there was that wonderful world of smells! You might say that the thought uppermost in my mind was this: Joe Bodenland, you have escaped the twenty-first century!

My sleep had done something for me. Earlier in the day, I had been close to despair. Driving the Felder, I looked back towards the ranch and found it had disappeared. I had left it only twenty minutes earlier. In complete panic, I turned the car around then drove back to where the house had been. I knew exactly where it stood because one of our pampas bushes was there and, in the middle of it, a coloured ball of Tony's. Nothing else. The ranch, the children, all had snapped back to their normal time.

Blackest despair—now total euphoria! I was a different man, full of strength and excitement. Something the innkeeper had said when I made apologies for possessing no luggage had begun to tip my mood.

"Herr Bonaparte has a lot to answer for. He may be safely out of the way again now, but a lot of decent people have no safety and no homes."

He had taken me for some kind of refugee from the Napoleonic Wars! They had finished in 1815, with Napoleon's banishment to St. Helena. So the date was some time shortly after that.

You think I could take such knowledge calmly? Mina, will you ever hear these tapes? Don't you see, as far as I knew, I was the first man ever to be displaced in time, though no doubt the timeslips were now making a regular thing of it. I remembered reading the old nursery classic, Herbert Wells's "The Time Machine", but Wells's time-traveller had gone ahead in time. How much nicer to go back. The past was safe!

I was back in history! Something

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had come over me. Rising from the bed, I felt curiously unlike myself. Or rather, I could feel the old cautious Bodenland inside, but it seemed as if a new man, fitted for decision and adventure, had taken control of me. I went downstairs to demand supper.

Men were drinking there by a fire, beneath a cuckoo-clock. There were tables, two empty, two occupied. One of the occupied tables contained a man and woman and child, tucking in to great slabs of meat. At the other occupied table sat a lean-visaged but elegant man in dark clothes, reading a paper by candle-light as he ate.

Ordinarily, I would have chosen an empty table. In my new mood, I went over to the solitary man and said easily, pulling out a chair, "May I sit at your table?"

For a moment I thought my accent had not been understood. Then he said, "I can't stop you sitting here," and lowered his head to his paper again.

I sat down. The innkeeper's daughter came across to me, and offered me a choice of trout or venison. I ordered trout with white wine to accompany it. She was back promptly with a chilled wine and bread rolls with a crisp brown crust and thick doughy interior, which I broke and ate with covert greed. How heady was my excitement, tasting that historic food!

"May I offer you a glass of wine?" I said to my table companion. He had an earthenware jug of water by his side.

He looked up and studied me again. "You may offer, sir, and I may refuse. The social contract countenances both actions!"

"My action may be more mutually beneficial than yours."

Maybe my answer pleased him. He nodded, and I summoned the girl to bring another wine glass.

My hesitant companion said, "May I drink to your health without necessarily wishing to listen to your conversation? You will think me discourteous, but perhaps I may excuse myself by explaining that it is the discourtesy of grief."

"I'm sorry to hear that. To hear that you have cause for grief, I mean. Some find distraction welcome at such times."

"Distraction? All my life I have been a man who scorned distraction! There's work to be done in the world—so much to be found out—!" He checked himself abruptly, lifted his glass to me and took a sip from it.

How good that wine tasted, if only because I secretly thought, what a rare old vintage I must be quaffing, laid down no doubt before the Battle of Trafalgar!

I said, "I am older than you, sir (how easily that polite 'sir' crept in as a mode of address!)—old enough to discover that *finding out* often leads to less pleasureable states of mind than mere ignorance!"

At that he laughed curtly. "That I find an ignorant point of view. I perceive nevertheless that you are a man of culture, and a foreigner. Why do you stay in Secheron and

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deny yourself the pleasures of Geneva?"

"I like the simple life."

"I should be in Geneva now. . . I arrived there too late, after sunset, and found the gates of the town shut, confound it. Otherwise I'd be at my father's house. . ."

Again an abrupt halt to his speech. He frowned and stared down at the grain of the table. I longed to ask questions but was wary of revealing my complete lack of local knowledge.

The girl brought me soup and then my trout, the best and freshest I had ever tasted, though the potatoes that accompanied it were not so good. *No refrigeration*, I thought; *not a can to be found throughout the land!* A shock went through me. Cultural shock. Temporal shock.

My companion took this opportunity to hide himself in his papers. So I listened to the talk of the travellers about me, hoping for a bit of instant history. But were they talking about the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars? Were they talking about the increasing industrialisation of the times? Were they talking about the first steamship crossing the Atlantic? Were they talking about Walter Scott or Lord Byron or Goethe or Metternich? Were they talking about the slave trade or the Congress of Vienna? (All matters which I judged to be vital and contemporary!) Did they spare one word for that valiant new American nation across the Atlantic?

They did not.

They talked about the latest sensation—some wretched murder—and about a woman, a maidservant, who was to be tried for the murder in Geneva the next day! I would have sighed for human nature, had it not been for the excellence of my trout and the wine which accompanied it.

At last, as I set my knife and fork down, I caught the gloomy eye of my table-companion and ventured to say, "You will be in Geneva tomorrow in time to see this wretched woman brought to justice, I presume?"

His face took on severe lines, anger glowed in his eyes. Setting his papers down, he said in a low voice, "Justice, you say? What do you know of the case that you prejudge this lady's guilt beforehand? Why should you be so anxious that she should hang? What injury did she ever do you—or any living soul, for that matter?"

"I must apologise—I see you know the lady personally."

But he had dropped his eyes and lost interest in me. Shrinking back in his chair, he seemed to become prey to some inner conflict. "About her head hangs purest innocence. Deepest guilt lies heavy on the shoulders. . ." I did not catch his last words; perhaps he said ". . .of others".

I rose, bid him good evening, and went outside to stand in the road and enjoy the scents of darkness and the sight of the moon. Yes, I stood in the middle of the road, and gloried that there was no

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danger of being knocked down by traffic.

The sound of a running stream invited me over to a bridge. Standing there in shade, I observed the man and woman who had also been eating in the hotel emerge with their child.

He said, "I wonder if Justine Moritz will sleep peacefully tonight!" They both chuckled and passed on down the road.

Justine Moritz! I divined that they spoke of the woman who was on trial for her life in Geneva on the morrow. More! I had heard that name before, and searched my memory to discover its associations. I recalled de Sade's heroine, Justine, and reflected that he too would be alive now, if *now* was when I believed it to be. But my new superior self told me that Justine Moritz was somebody else.

As I stood with my hands resting on the stone of the bridge, the door of the hotel was again thrown open. A figure emerged, pulling a cloak about him. It was my melancholy friend. An accordion sounded within the hotel, and I guessed that the seductions of music would have driven him outside.

His movements suggested as much. He paced about with arms folded. Once, he threw them wide in a gesture of protest. He looked in every way a man distraught. Although I felt sorry for him, that prickliness in his manner made me reluctant to reveal myself to him.

Of a sudden, he made up his mind. He said something aloud —something about a devil, I thought—and then he began striding away as if his life depended on it.

My superior self came to an immediate decision. Normally, I would have returned indoors and gone meekly to bed. Instead, I began to follow my distraught friend at a suitable distance.

The way he went led downhill. The road curved, and I emerged from a copse to confront a splendid panorama. There was the lake —Lake Geneva, Lake Leman, as the Swiss call it—and there, not far distant, lay the spires and roofs of Geneva!

It was a city I had loved in my time. Now, how it was shrunken! The moonlight lent it enchantment, of course, but what a pokey place it looked, lying by the lakeside in the clear night. Romantic behind its walls, yes, but nothing to the great city I had known. In my day—why, Secheron would have been swallowed up in its inner suburbs!

But my superior self made nothing of that. We moved down the hill, my quarry and I. There was a village clinging to the lakeside. Somewhere lay the sound of singing—I say *lay* for the voice seemed to float on the waters as gently as a slight mist.

My friend went on down the winding road for about two miles, finishing at the quayside, where he rapped smartly on a door. I hung about further down the street, hoping not to be seen by the few people who were strolling there. I watched as he engaged a man who

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led him down to a boat; they climbed in, and the man began to haul away on his oars. The boat slipped through shadow and then could be seen heading across the lake, already slightly obscured by the tenuous mist. Without thinking, I went to the edge of the quay.

At once a man came up to me bearing a dim lantern and said, "Are you requiring a ferry to the other side of the lake, good sir?"

Why not? The chase was on. In no time, we had arranged terms. We climbed down to his fishing boat and were pushing off against the stonework. I told him to dowse his lantern and follow the other boat.

"I expect you are acquainted with the gentleman in the other vessel, sir," my oarsman said.

These villagers—of course they would make it their business to know anyone who was rich and whose father lived so near! Here was the chance to have my suspicions confirmed.

"I know his name," I said boldly. "But I'm surprised you should!"

"The family is well-known in these parts, good sir. He is young Victor Frankenstein, his famous father's son."

II.

FRANKENSTEIN'S BOAT moored at Plainpalais, on the other side of sleeping Geneva. In my day, the area formed part of the centre of that city. It was but a village, and four small sailing boats, sails drooping and oars plying, moved out from a tiny wooden jetty as we moved in.

Paying off my man, I followed Frankenstein at a distance. Can you imagine what my feelings were? I assume you cannot, for already the feelings I had at the time are inscrutible to me, so imbued was I with an electric sense of occasion. My superior self had taken over —call it the result of timeshock, if you will, but I felt myself in the presence of myth and, by association, *accepted myself as mythical*! It is a sensation of some power, let me tell you! The mind becomes simple and the will strong.

Frankenstein, *the* Frankenstein, walked briskly, and I followed briskly. Despite the peace of the early night, lightning was flickering about the horizon. Horizon may be an appropriate word in Texas, but it does no justice to the country beyond Plainpalais, for there the horizon includes Mont Blanc, the highest mountain in the Alps, or in Europe, for that matter. The lightning bathed the peak in intricate figures, which seemed to grow brighter as clouds rolled up and hid the moon. At first, the lightning was silent, almost furtive; then peals of thunder accompanied it.

The thunder helped to camouflage the noise of my steps. We were now climbing fairly steeply into the mountains and silence was impossible if I were not to lose my quarry. He paused at one point on a low hill and cried aloud—perhaps not

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without a touch of relish for the dramatic, characteristic of his age—"William, dearest little brother! Close by this spot wast thou murdered and thy dear innocence cast down!"

He raised his hands. Then he said, more soberly, "And the guilt rests with me. . ."and lowered his arms to his side.

I should be more particular in my description of this singular man. A side-view of his face was reminiscent of profiles seen on coins and medals, for his features were clear-cut and sharp. And one has to have some distinction to appear on a medal. This clarity, aided by his youth, made him handsome, though there was about the handsomeness something of the coldness of a coin. His features were a little too set. The melancholy that had struck me at first was very much a part of his character.

Rain began to fall in large heavy drops. As I recalled, storms spring up rapidly about the Swiss lakes, appearing to arrive from all corners of the sky at once. The thunder burst with a grand crash above our head, and the heavens flung down their contents upon us.

Over to the north-west, the dark bulk of the Jura was flickeringly lit. The lake became an intermittent sheet of fire. The heavy clouds that had gathered about the summit of Mont Blanc boiled from within. The world was full of noise, dazzling light, blinding darkness, torrential rain.

All of which served merely to raise Frankenstein's spirits. He walked more briskly now, still climbing, picking his way fast and carelessly, so that he could keep his face turned up as much as possible to the source of the storm.

He was shouting aloud. Much of what he said was lost in the noise, but once, as we climbed a precipitous path and were no more than four metres apart, I heard him cry aloud the name of William again. "William, my dear little angel! This is thy funeral, this thy dirge!"

With similar cries, he staggered out onto more level ground. I was about to break from sheltering rock and follow when I saw him stop aghast and raise one arm involuntarily in a gesture of self-protection.

In that broken place, rocks and shattered boulders lay in a half-circle, ruinous pines growing among them. My immediate thought was that Frankenstein had encountered a bear, and might at any moment come dashing back and discover me. Blunderingly, I moved to my left among the boulders, being careful to keep behind them and not be seen. Then, crouching down, I peered out through the pouring rain and saw such a sight as I will never forget.

Frankenstein was backing away, still holding that defensive gesture. His jaw hung open, and he was near enough for me to see the rain dashing from his face—when lightning showed him at all. Before him, a monstrous shape had emerged from a clump of shattered pines.

It was no bear. In most respects

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it was human in shape, but gigantic in stature, and there seemed nothing of a human being in the way it suddenly paced forward from the trees. The lightning came again, and a tremendous stroke of thunder. I was staring at Frankenstein's monster!

As if to increase my terror, there came at that instant a pause in the electric war overhead. Only faraway among the trees did a flickering still galvanise the distant Jura. *We* were cast into impenetrable blackness, with the rain still cascading down and that devilish thing on the loose!

I slipped limply to my knees in extreme terror, still staring ahead, never daring even to blink, though the rain poured down my forehead and over my staring eyes.

There was another streak of lightning overhead. Frankenstein had slumped back against a tree-trunk for support, his head lolling back as if he were about to collapse in a faint. His monster, the creature he had created, was striding towards him. Then blackness again.

Then more lightning. The gigantic figure had passed by Frankenstein as if the latter did not exist. But it was coming towards me. I saw that its arms did not swing properly as it walked—but, oh, how fast it walked!

Another great peal of thunder, then more lightning. The abominable thing took a tremendous leap. It was above me on the rocks, and then it sprang into the darkness behind me. For a moment I heard its footsteps in something between a walk and a run, then it was gone. I was left crouching in the rain.

After a while, I pulled myself together and stood up. The storm seemed to be moving over a little. Frankenstein still leaned against the tree, bereft of movement.

During one flash of lightning, I saw a hut, a mountain refuge, standing some way behind me. I could take the rain no longer. I was frozen, although the weather had only a half-share in that. As I headed towards shelter, I glanced south, where another peak—its name is Mount Saleve—stood against the troubled sky. There I saw the monster again, swarming up the cruel face. It went like a spider, climbing almost perpendicularly. It was superhuman.

I burst into the hut, gasping and shuddering, and stripped off jacket, shirt, and undervest. Between chattering teeth, I was talking to myself.

In the hut were a wooden bed, a stove, a table, and rope. A rough blanket lay neatly folded on the bed. I snatched it up and flung it round me, sitting there shaking.

Gradually, the rain petered out. A wind blew, all was silence, save for the dripping roof outside. The lightning ceased. My trembling ceased. My earlier excitement returned.

I—I—had seen Frankenstein's monster! There was no mistaking it.

Of its face I had no clear idea. The twenty-first century 4D representations had prepared me for something horrific; yet my impression was of something more frigh-

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tening than strictly horrifying. I could not recall the face. The light was so confusing, the monster's movements so fast, that I had a memory only of an abstraction of sculptured bone. The overall impression had been fully as alarming as anyone could have anticipated. Its creator's reaction to it had merely added to my alarm.

Picking up my wet clothes, I moved out of the hut.

I had thought the moonlight was diffused through cloud, so general was the dim light. Once I was outside, however, I saw that the sky was almost free of cloud and the moon had set. Dawn was breaking over the world once more.

Victor Frankenstein was still in the clearing where I had last seen him. As if immune to discomfort and pain, he stood in his damp cloak with one foot up on a stone. Resting his weight on his bended knee, he was staring motionless over a precipice towards the lake. What he looked at inwardly, I know not. But his immobility, long maintained, hinted at the heaviness of his thoughts, and lent him something of the awe that attached to his odious creation.

I was about to make quietly down the hillside when he moved. Slowly, he shook his head once or twice, and then began to make the descent. Since daylight was flooding into the world, I was able to stay at a distance and keep him in sight. So we both came down from the mountain. Truth was, I more than once looked back over my shoulder to see if anything was following me.

The gates of Geneva were open. Waggons were going out empty, heading for the forest. I saw a spanking stage emerge and take the road that led to Chamonix, its four horses stepping high. At a much less lively pace, Frankenstein entered between the grey walls, and I ceased to follow him.

III.

THIS RECORD so far has been dictated in one long burst. After watching Victor Frankenstein walk towards his father's house, I came through Geneva and back to Secheron and my automobile. The Felder was as I had left it; I climbed in and put this account in my portable tape-memory.

My heart-searchings must have no place here. Before getting to the murder trial, I will note two incidents that occurred in Geneva. Two things I wanted above all, and one of them was money, for I knew old systems of currency were in operation throughout the nineteenth century. The second thing I found quickly by looking at a newspaper in a coffee-shop: the day's date. It was the 23rd of May, 1816.

I scanned the paper for news. It was disappointingly empty of anything I could comprehend; mainly there was local news, with a great deal of editorialising about the German Constitution. The name of Carl August of Saxe-Weimar figured largely, but I had heard neither

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of him nor of it. Perhaps I had naively expected headlines of the HUMPHREY DAVY INVENTS MINERS' SAFETY LAMP, ROSSINI WRITES FIRST OPERA, HENRY THOREAU BORN, kind of thing!

My quest for money also held its disappointments. I had on my wrist—besides my CompC phone, now useless—a new disposable watch, powered by a uranium isotope and worth at least seventy thousand dollars at current going price in U.S.A., 2020. As a unique object in Geneva, 1816, how much greater should its value be! Moreover, the Swiss watchmakers were the best equipped in the world at this time to appreciate its sophistication!

Full of hope, I took the watch in to a smart business in the Rue du Rhone, where it was examined by a stately manager.

"How do you open it?" he asked.

"It won't open. It is sealed shut."

"Then how does one examine the works if something goes wrong?"

"That is the whole virtue of this particular make of watch. It does not go wrong. It is guaranteed never to go wrong!"

He smiled very charmingly at me.

"Certainly its defects are very well concealed. So too is the winder!"

"Ah, but it does not wind. It will go forever—or at least for a century. Then it stops, and one throws it away. It is a disposable watch."

His smile grew still sweeter. He looked at my clothes, all creased and still damp from the night's activities. "I observe you are a foreigner, m'sieu. I presume this is a foreign watch. From the Netherlands, perhaps?"

"It's North Korean," I said.

With the tenderest of smiles, he proferred my watch to me in an open palm. "Then may I suggest you sell your unstoppable watch back to the North Koreans, m'sieu!"

At two other establishments I had no better luck. But at a fourth I met an inquisitive little man who took greatly to the watch, examining it under magnifying glasses and listening to its working through a miniature stethoscope.

"Very ingenious, even if it is powered by a bee who will expire as you leave my premises!" he said. "Where was it made?"

"It's the latest thing from North America." I was learning caution.

"Such a timepiece! What is this 'N.K.' inscribed on its face?"

"It stands for New Kentucky."

"I have not even seen this metal before. It interests me, and I shall have pleasure taking it apart and examining its secrets."

"Those secrets could set you a century ahead of all rival watchmakers."

We began arguing over prices. In the end, I accepted a derisory sum, and left his shop feeling sore and cheated. Yet, directly I stepped out into the sunshine again, my superior self took over, and I looked at the matter differently. I had good solid

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francs in my pocket, and what did the watchmaker have? A precision instrument whose chief virtues were useless to anyone in this age. Its undeviating accuracy in recording the passage of time to within one twenty-millionth of a second was a joke in a world that still went largely by the leisurely passage of the sun, where stage-coaches left at dawn, noon, or sunset. That wretched obsession with time which was a hallmark of my own age had not yet set in; there were not even railway timetables to make people conform to the clock.

As for the workings of the watch, there was another item this world was mercifully without: uranium! That element had been a twentieth-century discovery and, within a few years of its first refinement, it had been used in new and more powerful weapons of destruction.

Even the United States of Korea—in my day, one of the foremost manufacturing countries of the world, with the deepest mantle-mines—in 1816, the peoples of the Korean peninsula would be painting exquisite scenes on silk and carving delicate ivory. Between slaying each other by the sword, admittedly, in preparation for more energetic centuries to come. . .

The more I thought about it, the shedding of my watch became symbolic, and I rejoiced accordingly.

If I was learning about time, I was also learning about my legs. They brought me through the city and back to Secheron in good order. I had not walked so far for years.

I'm in the automobile now, my last little bastion of the twenty-first century. It is uranium-powered too. I returned to the spot where my home once stood, looked affectionately at Tony's bright plastic ball in the knot of pampas, and left a plastic message pad beside it with a message for Mina, in case the area does a timeslip again and she happens to be there.

This brings my record up-to-date. I must sleep before relating what happened at the murder trial. I am fit and charged with excitement, beside myself in a strangely literal way. Maybe it is obvious what I shall be compelled to do next.

IV.

BEFORE I DESCRIBE the trial of Justine Moritz, I must set down what I know about Frankenstein, in the hope of clarifying my mind.

The little I know is little enough. Victor Frankenstein is the eponymous central character of a novel by Mary Shelley. He amalgamated parts of human bodies to create a 'monster', which he then brought to life. The monster wreaked destruction on him and his house. Among the general public, the name of creator and created became confused.

I remember reading the novel as a child, when it made a great impression on me, but the deplorable pastiches and plagiarisations put out by the mass media have obliterated my memory of the original details.

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Although I know that the novel was published in the Nineteenth Century, the actual date escapes me. The author was Mary Shelley, wife of the Romantic Poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, but very little of her life comes back to memory. Also, I had the impression that Victor Frankenstein was purely an invented character; however, recent events have somewhat shaken my preconceptions of probability!

From the first moment I set eyes on Frankenstein, at the hotel in Secheron, I had the impression of a man with a burdensome secret. After selling my watch, I thought further about him, and perceived a link between his past and my future. The aspirations of the society of my day were mirrored in small in that watch: the desire that it should never need maintenance, should never run down. Such were Victor Frankenstein's perfectionist obsessions in relation to human anatomy, when he began his investigations into the nature of life. When he reflected on how age and death laid waste man's being, and saw a means of interfering with that process, he acted as harbinger to the Age of Science then in its first dawn.

Was that not the whole burden of his song, that nature needed in some way to be put to rights, and that it was man's job to see it was put to rights? And had not that song passed like a plague virus to every one of his fellow men in succeeding generations? My supremely useless watch, product of endless refinement and research, target of envy for those who did not possess one, was a small example of how his diseased mentality had triumphed. The Conquest of Nature—the loss of man's inner self!

You see the leaps my mind takes. I lived but one day of the spring in 1816 and I was full of love for it—and of hate for what man had done to change that sturdy and natural order.

Even as I say it, I know my statement to be sentimental and truth to be more complex than that. To regard the people and society of 1816 as 'better' than those of my day would be a mistake. For I had already sat through a grave miscarriage of justice.

The trial of Justine Moritz began at eleven. The court was packed. I managed to get a fairly good seat, and it was my fortune to sit next to a man who delighted in explaining the nuances of the case to a foreigner.

He pointed out to me the benches where the Frankenstein family sat. They were noticeable enough. While the rest of the courtroom was filled with excited anticipation, covert but gloating, the faces of the Frankensteins were all gloomy. They could have been members of the House of Atreus.

First came old syndic Alphonse Frankenstein, bent of shoulder, grey of hair; but his gaze, as he looked about the court, was still commanding. As my companion informed me, he had held many important posts in Geneva, and was a counsel-

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lor, as his father and grandfather had been before him.

The counsellor was consoled by Elizabeth Lavenza, who sat next to him. I thought she was startlingly beautiful, even in her grief, with her fair hair tucked under a dainty mourning bonnet, and her slim upright figure. She had been adopted as a small child by the counsellor's wife, now dead—so said my companion, adding that it was well known that she would marry Victor, and so come into a deal of money. She had instigated a series of protracted lawsuits in her own right with authorities in Milan, Vienna, and a German city, trying to reclaim a fortune supposedly left her by a defecting father. Maybe news of these extensive litigations, as well as her beauty, drew many pairs of eyes towards where she sat.

Victor sat on her other side. He was pale and composed at first, his features rigidly set. He held his head defiantly lifted, as if he wished no man to see him in dejection; somehow I felt the gesture very characteristic, and was able for the first time to recognize his arrogance.

Next to Victor was his brother Ernest, slender and rather dandyish in his dress although, like the rest of his family, he was in deep mourning. Ernest fidgetted and looked about him, occasionally addressing remarks to his elder brother, which Victor made no noticeable attempt to answer. The two brothers were present in court because of the foul murder of their younger brother, William, who had been found strangled.

"Poor little lad, only six-and-a-half years old!", said my companion. "They do say he was sexually assaulted, but the family's trying to keep it hushed up."

"If that was so, surely his nurse, Justine Moritz, would not have tampered with him."

"Oh, she did it right enough, make no mistake about that! The evidence all points to it. You never know about people nowadays, do you?"

"Where was the child murdered? At home?"

"No, no, outside the city, up in the hills, where he was playing with his brother Ernest. Out by Plainpalais, towards Mont Saleve."

Then I understood more fully Frankenstein's quest in the storm of the previous night! He had been seeking out the spot on which his little brother was strangled—and we had encountered the murderer there.

Waves of cold ran over me, over my flesh and through my body. I thought I was about to faint, and could pay no attention as my companion pointed out the Clervals, a wealthy merchant family, of whom Henry Clerval was a close friend of Victor's; Duvillard, a righ banker, and his new wife; Louis Manoir; and many other local notables. Victor turned once, to nod to Henry Clerval.

What struck me about the Frankensteins was their youth, the father excepted, of course. Set-faced though he was, Victor was certainly

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not more than twenty-five, and Elizabeth probably younger, while Ernest was still in his mid-teens.

When Justine Moritz was led into the box, I saw that she also was extremely young. A rather plain girl, but with the radiance of youth on her face, though that radiance was well subdued by her present predicament. She spoke up properly when questioned.

I cannot go into the whole trial; time is too short. Despite excellent character-witnesses, among them Elizabeth, who delivered an impassioned plea on her maid's behalf, Justine stood condemned by one piece of circumstantial evidence: a locket containing a picture of her late mistress had been found in her belongings—a locket which the child William had been wearing only the day before the murder. The girl could not explain how the locket came to be among her clothes, and it was clear that her protestations of innocence were in vain. The feeling of the court was almost a tangible thing: something vile had happened and someone had to pay for it; Justine was captive: Justine must pay.

Tremors of horror were still racking me. For only I and one other person in that courtroom knew the truth, knew that the hand which had despatched William had been neither a female hand nor a male one, but the hand of a terrible neuter thing!

My gaze went frequently to the other bearer of that awful secret. Whereas Elizabeth was composed, though pale, Victor became increasingly nervous, rubbing his forehead and his lips with a handkerchief, hiding his eyes in his palms, staring about in a distraught fashion.

Would he rise and declare his knowledge? But what could he say that would find credence here? Nobody else had seen his monster! Such a tale as he would have to tell would be instantly dismissed, the court being in the frame of mind it was. As well might I have risen and said, "I will tell you what really happened, for this trial and the real issues involved will one day become the subject of a great novel, and I am a man from two centuries into your future who read that book as a lad. . ."

Prepostrous! But the temptation to intervene grew nevertheless, particularly as I saw things turning against the innocent maidservant.

Victor could bear it no longer. There was a scuffle and he stood up, pushed past brother and friends, and dashed from the courtroom.

Elizabeth stood up, a commanding little figure with one hand half-extended, and watched him go. The proceedings continued.

When all had been said that could be said, the judge made a brief summary, the ballots were cast, and the verdict was solemnly delivered. Justine Moritz was found guilty of the murder of William Frankenstein, and was sentence to be hanged within the space of two days.

V.

IF THE PHRASE is not inappropriate

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here, there was no time to be lost. I paid a farmer with a horse to drag my car through the streets of the city and out to the Plainpalais gate. In that way, it became less obtrusive, particularly as I had the man throw a tarpaulin over it. In any case, the good citizens of Geneva had enough else to think about at this juncture.

I knew that there was one place, and one place only—and there one person only—to which I might turn for help!

When I had paid the farmer off, I started my car, my remaining outpost of another century, and drove along a road which led close to the lake. Little I cared then who saw me. My superior self was on a quixotic errand!

Quixotic or not, I had no real idea of where I was going. Or rather, I had an idea, but it was of the vaguest. Far more clear in my mind were recurrent pictures of Victor trembling as if with fever; Elizabeth, fair and beautiful and composed; Justine, pleading without effect for her life before a room full of people covertly eager for her blood; and the creature Frankenstein had made—that gigantic figure without a face, striking fear and worse than fear wherever it went. Although I knew it moved rapidly, all I had of it in my memory was a series of still pictures, captured in rain by lightning. It was enemy to the world, yet the world knew nothing of it! What a madman Frankenstein was to have created such a thing, and to hope to keep its existence a secret!

I tried to recall details of Frankenstein's ghastly history. How would he act if he knew that his career was to be made into fiction, to serve as an object lesson, and a name of opprobrium, to the generations that followed him? Unfortunately, I had not read Mary Shelley's novel since I was a lad; such recollection of it as I had was obscured by the travesties of it I had watched in 4D on film, TV, and CircC.

At this juncture, I realised that I had driven close to the point where the boat had landed me the previous evening. I was not far from where the boy William had been murdered. I stopped the car.

There were binoculars in the Felder. Nor had I forgotten the swivel-gun mounted on the roof. The thought that such armament was compulsory for anyone privileged enough to own a private car in my own time reminded me that, Napoleonic Wars apart, I was now in an age where the safety and sanctity of the individual was taken for granted. If you read this, Mina, no doubt you will realise what was in my mind; supernaturally fast Frankenstein's creation might be, but the swivel-gun would stop him!

Through the binoculars, I traced the path I had taken the night before when following Victor.

As I half-expected, Victor had returned to the scene of his younger brother's murder. No doubt he had fled straight there from the pressures of the court. I could not see him well; he was mainly hidden be-

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hind trees, and motionless. Although I scanned the terrain round about him anxiously, I could discover no sign of the monster.

Locking the car, I began to climb the hill.

So far, I have evaded a central issue. Now it was forced on me. The accidents that had brought me back into the past were real enough. My whole being accepted the fact that I was, *at least in some fashion,* in Switzerland in the year 1816, in the month of May.

But Frankenstein? He was a fictitious character, a myth, wasn't he? There was no way that I could understand whereby he could exist. The fact that *I* was where I was might be highly unlikely; that did not make *his* being there any more likely. In fact, I had to admit it, I found his existence impossible to explain. Although I was about to confront him, my experience told me that he was—well, I've no words for it: on a different plane of reality.

At last I was up on a level with him. The lake was below, the dull tinkle of cowbells came up to me. A peaceful enough spot, yet made profoundly melancholy by reason of its associations. The trees in their light spring foliage held no cheer.

Frankenstein was walking to and fro now, muttering to himself. In my hesitation to step forth lay this question: supposing that this encounter revealed *my* unreality rather than his. .? As I was about to move forward, a whole cloud of doubt precipitated itself upon me. The frail web of human perceptions was laid bare. I stood outside myself and saw myself there, a poor creature whose energies were based on a slender set of assumptions, whose very identity was a chancey affairs of chemicals and accidents.

"Who's there? Come forth if you still haunt this place, damned being!"

Maybe I had made some inadvertent noise. Victor was confronting me, his face white and drawn. I saw no fear there.

I stood forth.

"Who are you, and what do you want with me? Are you from the court?"

"Herr Frankenstein, my name is Bodenland, Joseph Bodenland. We met at the hotel yesterday. I apologise for intruding upon you."

"No matter, if you have news. Is a verdict out yet?"

"Yes." I had recovered myself by now. "Justine has been condemned to death. The verdict was the inevitable one in view of your silence."

"What do you know of my affairs? Who sent you here?"

"I am here on my own account. And I know little of your affairs, except the one crucial thing which nobody else seems to know—the central secret of your life!"

He was still confronting me in a pugnacious attitude, but at this he took a step back.

"Are you another phantom sent to plague me? A product of my imagination?"

"You are sick, man! Because of

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your sickness, an innocent woman is going to die, and your fair Elizabeth is going to be plunged into misery."

"Whoever or whatever you are, you speak truth. Unhappy wretch that I am, I left my native fireside and alienated home to seek strange truths in undiscovered lands. My responsibility is too great, too great!"

"Then you must yield some of it to others. Go before the syndics of Geneva and declare your error. They will then do their best to right what has gone wrong; at the least, they can set Justine free. It's useless to come up here and luxuriate in your sins!"

He had been wringing his hands. Now he looked up angrily. "Who are you to charge me with that? Luxuriate, you say! What do you know of my inner torment? —Rendered all the worse by the high hopes I once had, the desire to wrest from Mother Nature some of her deepest secrets, however dark the passage down which I might tread. What cared I for myself? Truth was everything to me! I wanted to improve the world, to deliver into man's hands some of those powers which had hitherto been ascribed to a snivelling and fictitious God! I made my bed in charnels and on coffins, that a new Promethean fire might be lit! What man ever achieved what I have achieved? And you speak of my *sins*!"

"Why not? Isn't your ambition itself a sin? You admitted your own guilt, didn't you?"

His manner became less wild. Almost contemplatively, he said, "Since I am an atheist and do not believe in God, I do not believe in sin in the sense you intend the word. Nor do I believe that the zeal of discovery is a cause for shame. But guilt I believe in, oh yes! I sometimes think that guilt is a permanent condition with me and, possibly, with all men in their secret hearts. Perhaps religions have been invented to try to exercise that condition. It is guilt, not age or misunderstanding, that withers cheeks and drives friends and lovers apart.

"Yet why should this condition be? Whence does it come? Is it a modern thing? From now onwards, are all generations to feel guilty? Because man's powers grow, generation by generation. So much have we achieved, so much more is there to achieve. Must that achievement always carry the maggot of guilt in it?

"Or perhaps guilt has always been a condition of man, since the early days of the world, before time rolled out like a long slumber across the universe. Perhaps it is to do with the nature of his conception, and with the lustful coming together of man and woman.

"Why do you suppose that?"

"Because that intense pleasure which procreation gives is the moment when human beings shed their humanity and become as the animals, mindless, sniffing, licking, grunting, copulating. . . My new creation was to be free of all that.

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No animal origins, no guilt. . .''

With his hand, he covered his eyes and his brow.

''You have a singularly repulsive view of humanity,'' I said. ''Is this perhaps why you will do nothing to save Justine?''

''I cannot go to the syndics. I cannot!''

''At least tell the woman whom you love. There must be trust between you!''

''Tell Elizabeth? I would die of shame! I have not even confided in Henry, and he was a student with me at Ingoldstadt, when I began my experiments! No, what I have done myself, I must undo myself. Leave me now, whoever or whatever you are. I have said things to you, Bodenland, that I have said to no man; see that they repose in you as securely as in a grave. I am discomposed, or I would not speak as I have. I mean to arm myself from this day on—be warned, lest you are tempted to trespass on my confidence. Now, I pray, leave me.''

''Very well. If you will confide in nobody else, then you know what you must do.''

''Leave me, I asked you! You know nothing of my problems! —Wait, one commission you could do for me!''

''Ask me!''

He looked somewhat shamefaced. ''For good reasons which you may or may not understand, I desire to remain here in the wilderness, away from those to whom I may inadvertently bring catastrophe. Take, I beg you, a word of explanation to Elizabeth Lavenza, my betrothed.''

All his movements were impatient. Without waiting for my assent, he pulled writing materials from his cloak, where I saw he had several notebooks. He ripped a page from one of them. Turning, he leaned against a rock and scribbled a few sentences—with the air of a man signing his own death warrant, I thought.

''There!'', he folded it. ''I can trust you to deliver it unread?''

''Most certainly.'' I hesitated, but he turned away. His mind was already elsewhere.

VI.

I WENT ON FOOT to the house of the Frankensteins. It was an imposing mansion standing in one of Geneva's central streets and overlooking the Rhone. When I asked to speak for a moment with Miss Lavenza, a manservant showed me into a living room and asked me to wait.

To be there! Victor was right to wonder what I was. I no longer knew myself. My identity was becoming more and more tenuous. It would be the way of our century to say that I was suffering from time-shock, no doubt; since our personality is largely built and buttressed by our environment, and the assumptions environment and society force upon us, one has but to tip away that buttress and at once the personality is threatened with dissolution. Now that I actually stood in the

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house of Victor Frankenstein, I felt myself no more than a character in a fantastic film. It was not a displeasing sensation.

The furniture was light and cheerful. I could hear voices somewhere as I looked around, studying the portraits, examining the marquetry of the chairs and tables, all of which were ranged formally about the walls. A peculiar light seemed shed over everything, by dint of it being *that* house and no other!

I crossed to the window to look more closely at a portrait of Victor's mother. Long casement windows were open into a side garden laid with neat, symetrical paths. I heard a woman's voice somewhere above me say sharply, "Please do not mention the subject again!"

I had no scruples about eavesdropping.

A man's voice replied, "Elizabeth, dearest Elizabeth, you must have thought of these things fully as much as I! I beg you, let us discuss them! Secrecy will be the undoing of the Frankensteins!"

"Henry, I cannot let you say a word against Victor. Silence must be our policy! You are his dearest friend, and must act accordingly."

A tantalizing snatch of conversation!

Peeping cautiously, I could see that there was a balcony overlooking the garden. It belonged to a room on the first floor, where possibly Elizabeth had her own sitting room. That it was she, and talking to Henry Clerval, I now had no doubt.

He said, "I've told you how secretive Victor was in Ingoldstadt. At first, I thought he was mentally deranged. And then those months of what he chose to call nervous fever. . . . He kept babbling then about some fiend that had taken possession of him. He seemed to get over it, but he behaved in the same alarming manner in court this morning. As an old friend—as more than friend—I beg you not to contemplate marriage with him—"

"Henry, you must say no more or we shall quarrel! You know Victor and I are to be married. I admit Victor is evasive at times, but we have known one another since early childhood, we are as close as brother and sister—"

She checked what she was saying and then went on in an altered tone. "Victor is a scientist. We must respect his moods of abstraction." She was going on to add something more, when a cold voice behind me said, "What may you be after?"

I turned. It was a bad moment.

Ernest Frankenstein stood there. The anger on his brow made him look uncommonly like a younger version of his brother. He was dressed all in black.

"I am being kept waiting with a message for Miss Lavenza."

"I see you put your waiting to good use. Who are you?"

"My name, sir, since you enquire so civilly, is Bodenland. I come with word from Mr. Victor Frankenstein. He is your brother, is

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he not?"

"Didn't I see you in court this morning?"

"Whom did you not see in court this morning?"

"Give me the message. I will deliver it to my cousin."

I hesitated. "I would prefer to deliver it direct."

As he put out his hand, Elizabeth entered behind him. Perhaps she had heard our voices and used them as an excuse to break away from Henry Clerval.

Her entry gave me the chance to ignore Ernest and present her with Victor's note myself, which I did. As she read it, I was able to study her.

She was small, delicately made, and yet not fragile. Her hair was the most beautiful thing about her. True, her face was perfect of feature, but I thought I saw a coldness there, a pinched look about the mouth, which a younger man might have missed.

She read the note without changing her expression.

"Thank you," she said. I was dismissed in the phrase. She looked haughtily at me, waiting for me to leave. I gazed at her, thinking that if she had appeared gentler I might have ventured to say something to her on Victor's behalf. As it was, I nodded and made for the door; she looked the sort of woman who won protracted lawsuits.

I went back to the car.

Whatever the time was, it was later than I wished. I still hoped to aid Justine—or rather to correct the course of justice, feeling, in some vague and entirely unwarrantable way, that I was more civilized than these Genevese, having a two-century evolutionary lead over them!

My diversion with the Frankensteins had gained me nothing. Or perhaps it had. Understanding. I certainly understood more about the explosive nature of Frankenstein's situation; hell hath no fury like a reformer who wishes to remake the world and finds the world perfers its irredeemable self. And his complex emotional relationship with Elizabeth, which I had but glimpsed, made the situation that much more precarious.

These matters rolled round and round my brain, like a thunderstorm, like clothes in a tumble-drier. As I drove along the edge of the lake eastwards, I was hardly conscious of the beautiful and placid scenery. A steady rain began to fall. Perhaps it prevented me from noting how rapidly the season seemed to have advanced. The trees were now heavy with dark green foliage. The corn was already ripening and the vines in full leaf, with bunches of grapes hanging thickly.

My own world was forgotten. It had been displaced by my new personality, but what I believe I called earlier my superior self. The fact was that all sorts of strange gear-shifts were taking place within my psyche, and I was eaten up by the morbid drama of Frankenstein. Once more I tried to recall what was to happen, as recounted in

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Mary Shelley's book, but what little returned was too vague to be of use.

Certainly Frankenstein had gone away to study—to Ingoldstadt, I now know—and there spent some years researching into the nature of life. Eventually he had built a new being from dismembered corpses, and had reanimated it. How he had overcome all the complex problems of graft-rejection, septicaemia, and so on—not to mention the central problem of bestowing life—was beyond me, although I took it that fortune had favoured his researches. He had then been horrified by what he had done, and had turned against the creature to which he stood as God stood to Adam—that sounded like the baffled reformer again to me! In the end (or in the present future) the creature had overcome him. Or had he overcome it? Anyhow, something dreadful in the way of retribution had occurred, in the nature of things.

In the nature of things? Why should something dreadful come of good intentions?

It seemed an immensely important question, and not only when applied to Frankenstein. Frankenstein was no Faust, exchanging his immortal soul for power. Frankenstein wanted only knowledge—was, if you like, only doing a bit of research. He wanted to put the world to rights. He wanted a few answers to a few riddles.

That made him more like Oedipus than Faust. Oedipus was the world's first scientist. Then Frankenstein was the first R&D man. Oedipus had received a lot of dusty answers to his researches too!

I broke off that silly line of thought and retraced my mental steps.

Whatever previous generations made of it, Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein" was regarded by the twenty-first century as the first novel of the Scientific Revolution and, incidentally, as the first novel of science-fiction. Her novel had remained relevant over two centuries simply because Frankenstein was the archetype of the scientist whose research, pursued in the sacred name of the increasing knowledge, takes on a life of its own and causes untold misery before being brought under control.

How many of the ills of the modern world were not due precisely to Frankenstein's folly! And that included the most overwhelming problem of all, a world too full of people. That had led to the war, and to untold misery before that, for several generations. And what had caused the overpopulation? Why, basically, those purely benevolent intentions of medical gentlemen who had introduced and applied theories of hygiene, of infection, of vaccination, and of innoculation, thereby managing to reduce the appalling infant mortality rate!

Was there some immutable cosmic law that decreed that man's good intentions should always thunder back about his head, like slates from a roof?

My dim recollection was that

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there was discussion of such questions in Mary Shelley's novel. I needed desperately to get hold of a copy of the book. But when had it first been published? I could not recall. Was it a mid-Victorian novel?

There were some fragments of my education in English Literature which did return to me. And that was why I drove eastwards along Lake Geneva. I thought I had a good idea of where at least one copy of the novel would most certainly be.

When I saw the next gasthof coming up, I drew in to the side of the road, put on my raincoat, and walked along to it. I should mention that I had bought a few items of clothing that morning, before the trial began. I no longer looked quite such a time-traveller! (For most of the time, I had forgotten, was unable to remember, my previous existence!)

I was ravenously hungry. At the gasthof, they set before me a beautiful soup with dumplings in, followed by a great white sausage on a small alp of potato and onion-rings. This I washed down with lager from a great stein as monumentally carved as the Parthenon.

As I picked my teeth and smiled to myself, I glanced at the newspaper which had been placed, furled on its stick, beside my plate. My smile sank under the horizon. The paper was dated Monday, August 26th, 1816!

It was the paper of the day before. The details of the trial confirmed that. there was Justine's name, and the name of Frankenstein! Where had June and July gone? How did August get there?

Losing three months is a far nastier experience than being jolted back two centuries. Centuries are cold impersonal things. Months are things you live with. And three of them had just been whipped from under me. I paid my bill in very thoughtful fashion, and with a trembling hand.

When I stood at the doorway, hesitating to dash into the pouring rain, I could see that the landscape had moved with the date. Two men who had come in to quaff down great glasses of *apfelsaft* were now returning to their scythes in a field opposite, to join a line of sodden reapers there. The grapes that hung over mine host's door were turning a dusky shade as the juice ripened in their skins. August was here.

The gasthof-owner joined me at the door and stared with contempt at the sky. "I take it you're a foreigner, sir? This is the worst summer as we've had in these parts for a century, they do say."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, indeed it is. The worst summer in living memory. No doubt but the discharging of all the cannon and musketry at the Field of Waterloo caused an injury to the normal temperament of the sky."

"Rain or no rain, I must get on my way. Can you tell me of an English poet staying in these parts?"

He grinned broadly at me.

"Bless you, sir, I can tell you of *two* English poets! England must

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have as many poets as soldiers, so liberally does she scatter them hereabouts. They're staying not two leagues from this village."

"Two of them! Do you know their names?"

"Why, sir, one's the great Lord Byron, probably the most famous poet in the world, after Johann Schlitzberger—and a smarter dresser than Johann Schlitzberger he is, as well."

"The other English poet?"

"He's not famous."

"Shelley, is it?"

"Yes, I believe that's the name. He's got a couple of women with him. They're down along the road by the lake's edge. You can't miss them. Ask for the Villa Diodati."

I thanked him and hurried into the rain. What excitement was leaping inside me!

VII.

THE RAIN HAD STOPPED. Cloud lay thick across the lake, hiding the mountain peaks beyond. I stood under trees, surveying the stone walls and vines of the Villa Diodati. My superior self was working out a way to approach and make myself known.

Suppose I introduced myself to Shelley and Byron as a fellow-traveller. How much better if I could have introduced myself as a fellow poet! But in 1816 there were no American poets whose names I could recall. Memory suggested that both Byron and Shelley had a taste for the morbid; no doubt they would enjoy meeting Edgar Allan Poe—yet Poe would be only a child still, somewhere across a very wide Atlantic!

Social niceties were difficult to conduct across two hundred years. The fact that Lord Byron was probably the most famous poet in Europe at this time, even including Johann Schlitzberger, was not going to make things easier.

As I prowled about outside the garden wall, it came on me with a start that a young man was regarding me over the barrel of a pistol! I stopped still in my tracks.

He was a handsome young guy with a head of well-oiled reddish hair. He wore a green jacket, grey trousers, and high calf boots, and had a bold air about him.

"I'd be obliged if you would cease to point that antique at me!" I said.

"Why so? The tourist-shooting season opened today. I've bagged three already. You have only to come close enough to my hide and I let fly. I'm one of the best marksmen in Europe, and you are possibly the biggest grouse in Europe." But he lowered his pistol and came forward two paces.

"Thank you. It would be embarrassing to be shot before we were introduced."

He was still not looking particularly friendly. "Then be off into the undergrowth, my feathered friend. It makes me feel more than somewhat persecuted to have items of the British public lurking about my property—particularly when most of

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them haven't read two lines of my verse together."

I noted that he pronounced it in eighteenth-century fashion: "m' verse".

Taking the binoculars from round my neck, I proffered them, saying, "You observe how amateur my lurking was—not only did I not conceal myself, but I did not use my chief lurking weapon. Have you ever seen the like of these, sir?"

He tucked the gun into the top of his trousers. That was a good sign. Then he took the binoculars and peered at me through them.

Clicking his tongue in approval, he swerved to take in the lake.

"Let's see if Doctor Polly is up to anything he shouldn't be with our young Mistress Mary!"

I saw him focus on a boat which lay almost stationary beneath its single sail, fairly close to shore. But I wanted to take him in while his eyes were off me. Being so close to Lord Byron was somewhat like being close to big game—a lion encountered at the foot of Kilimanjiro. Although not a tall man, he had considerable stature. His shoulders were broad, his face handsome; you could see his genius in his eyes and lips. Only his skin, as I inspected him from fairly close quarters, was pallid and blotchy. I saw that there were grey hairs among his auburn locks.

He studied the sailing boat for a while, smiling to himself.

Then he chuckled. "Tasso keeps them apart, though their fingers meet on the pillows of his pastoral. The triumph of learning over concupisence! Polly itches for her, but they continue to construe. Red blood is nothing before a blue stocking!"

I could make out two figures in the boat, one male, one female.

I heard my own voice from a remote distance ask, "Do you refer to Mary Shelley, sir?"

Byron looked quizzically at me, holding the glasses out but just beyond my grasp. "Mary Shelley? No, sir, I refer to Mary Wellstonecraft Godwin. She is Shelley's mistress, not his wife. I thought that much was common knowledge. What d'you take 'em for, a pair of Christians? Though neither Shelley nor she are *pagans*, that's certain! Even now, Mary improves her mind at the expense of my doctor's body."

This news, combined with his presence, caused me some confusion. I could only say, stupidly, "I believed Shelley and Mary were married."

He withdrew the glasses again from my reach. "Mrs. Shelley is left behind in London—the only proper treatment for wives, apart from the horse-whip. Mind you, our fair student of Tasso may—*may* succeed. . ." He laughed. "There is a tide in the affairs of women which, taken at the flood, leads God knows where. . ."

The topic suddenly lost interest for him. Handing the glasses back to me, he said of them, with a haughty touch, "They're well enough. I just wish they spied out

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something more entertaining than water and doctors. Well, sir, since I presume you know my name, perhaps you would be kind enough to tell me yours—and your business here."

"My name is Joseph Bodenland, Lord Byron, and I am from Texas, in America, the Lone Star State. As for my business—well, it is of a private nature, and has to do with Mrs.—I mean, with Mary Godwin."

He smiled. "I had observed that you were not a damned Englisher. As long as you are not from London, Mr. Bodenland, like all the rest of the tedious world—and as long as your business is not with me—and mercifully private, to boot—perhaps you will honour me by joining me in a glass of claret. We can always shoot each other later, if needs be."

"I hope not, as long as the rain holds off."

"You will find, if you are long here, that, in this terrible spot, Mr. Bodenland, the rain holds *up*, but seldom *off*. Every day contains more weather than a week in Scotland, and weeks in Scotland can drag on for centuries, believe me! Come!"

As if in support of his wild statement, rain began to fall heavily. "The sky squelches like a grouse-moor! Let's get in!" he said, limping rapidly ahead of me.

We went into his villa, I in sheer delight and excitement and, I think, he in some relief at having somenew to talk to. What a spellbinder he was! We sat and drank before a smouldering fire while he conversed. I have tried to convey a pale memory of our meeting, but further than that I cannot go. The range of his talk was beyond me—even when not particularly profound, it was salted with allusions, and the connections he drew between things I had hitherto regarded as unconnected were startling. Then, though he boasted of this and that, it was with an underlying modesty which often spilled over into self-mockery. I was at a temporal disadvantage, for some things to which he made reference were unknown to me.

At least I gathered a few facts, which drifted down like leaves amid the mellow August of his talk. He lived in the Villa Diodati with his doctor, "Polly", the Italian, Polidori, and his retinue. The Shelley menage was established close by—"Just a grape's stamp across the vineyard", as he put it—in a property called Campagne Chapuis: the Villa Chapuis, as I was later to hear it called, more grandly. "My fellow reprobate and exile" (that was how he designated Shelley) was established with two young women, Mary Godwin and her half-sister, Claire Clairmont. Byron raised both his eyebrow and his glass when referring to Claire Clairmont.

Prompted by his remark, I recalled that Byron was now in exile. There had been a scandal in London—but scandals gathered as naturally round Byron as clouds round Mont Blanc. He had left England in disgust.

Beneath his glass lay a sheet of paper, sopping up wine. I thought

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to myself, if I could only get that back to 2020, how much would it be worth! And I asked him if he found his present abode conducive to the writing of poetry.

"This is my present abode," he said, tapping his head. "How much longer I shall stay in it and not go out of it, who knows! There seems to be some poetry rattling about in there, rather as air rattles about in the bowels, but to get it out with a proper report—that's the trick! The great John Milton, that blind justifier of God to Man, stayed under this very roof once. Look what it did to him—'Paradise Regained'! The greatest error in English letters, outside of the birth of Southey. But I had news today that Southey was sick. Tell me something that cheered you recently, Mr. Bodenland. We don't have to talk literature, y'know—I'd as leave hear news of America, parts of which still linger in the Carboniferous Age, I understand."

As I was about to open my mouth like a fish, the outer door swung open and in bounced two hounds, followed by a slender young man shaking raindrops from his head. He scattered water about from a blue cap he carried, while the dogs sent flurries of water everywhere. In the half-hour I had spent with Lord Byron, I had forgotten that it was again raining steadily.

Byron jumped up with a roar and offered the newcomer a plaid rug on which to dry his hair. The roar made the dogs scatter, barking, and a manservant to appear. The servant banished the dogs and threw logs into the great tiled stove before which we had been sitting.

It was plain how pleased the two men were to see one another. The patter that passed between them spoke of an easy familiarity, and was so fast and allusive that I could hardly follow it.

"I seem to have a veritable Serpentine in my locks," said the newcomer, still shedding water and laughing wildly.

"Did I not say last night that you were serpent-licked, and Mary agreed? Now you are serpent-locked!"

"Then forgive me while I discharge my serpentine!"—said while towelling vigorously.

"I'll do my duty by a yet older form. Um—'Ambo florentes aetatibus, Arcades ambo. . .' "

"Capital! And it's a motto that would serve for us both, Albe, even if our Arcadia is liable to flood!"

Byron had his glass in his hand. In the excitement, the sheet of paper that had lain beneath the glass fluttered to the floor. I picked it up. My action recalled my presence to him. Taking my arm as if in apology for a moment's neglect, Byron said, "My dear Bodenland, you must be acquainted with my fellow reprobate and exile." So I was introduced to Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Yes, Byron introduced me to Shelley. From that moment on, my severance with the old modes of reality was complete.

The younger man was im-

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mediately all confusion, like a girl. He was habited youthfully, in black jacket and trousers, over which he had a dripping cape. The blue cap he tossed to the floor in order to grasp my hand. He gave me a dazzling smile. Shelley was all electricity where Byron was all beef—if I can say that without implying lack of admiration for Byron. He was taller than Byron, but stooped slightly, whereas Byron's demeanour was almost soldierly at times. He was spotty, boney, beardless, but absolutely animated.

"How d'you do, Mr. Bodenland—you are in time to listen to a little revision!" He pulled a paper from his pocket and began to read a poem, assuming a somewhat falsetto voice.

"Some say that gleams of a remoter world

"Visit the soul in sleep—that death's a slumber,

"And that its shapes the busy thoughts outnumber

"Of those who wake and live! I look on high—"

Byron clapped his hands to interrupt. "Sorry, I disagree with those sentiments! Hark to my immortal answer—

"When Time, or son or late, shall bring

"The dreamless sleep that lulls the dead—

"Then your remoter worlds, old thing,

"Will lie extinguished in your head!

"Forgive my coarse and characteristic interruption! But don't work the poet business so hard. I don't need convincing! Either you are a worse poet than I, in which case I'm bored—or you're better, when I'm jealous!"

"I compete only with myself, Albe, not with you," Shelley said. But he tucked his manuscript away with a good grace.

"That game's too easy for you! You always excel yourself," Byron said kindly, as if anxious that he might have hurt Shelley's feelings. "Come on, have some wine, and there's laudanum on the chimney-piece if you need it. Mr. Bodenland was about to tell me of some tremendous thing that cheered him recently!"

Shelley sat close, pushing away the wine, and looked into my face. "Is that indeed so? Did you see a ray of sunshine or something like that?"

Glad of the diversion, I said, "Someone told me today that the bad weather was caused by all the cannonballs discharged on the Field of Waterloo last year."

Shelley burst into laughter. "I hope you have something more tremendous than *that* to tell us."

Put on my mettle, I told them as simply as I could of how Tony, Poll, and Dorren had made their 'Feast', burying their doll (I substituted doll for scouter) and covering the mound with flowers; and how, at the end, as a simple token of courtesy or affection, Tony had presented his penis for Doreen's pleasure.

Although Shelley smiled only

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faintly, Byron roared with laughter and said, "Let me tell you of an inscription I once saw scrawled on the wall of a low jakes in Chelsea. It said, 'The *cazzo* is our ultimate weapon against humanity'! Though the Italian word was not employed, come to think of it. Can you recall a graffito more charged with knowledge?"

"And maybe self-hatred, too," I ventured, when I saw Shelley was silent.

"And below it another hand had scribbled a codicil: 'And the vagina our last ditch defence'! Your noble savage of the slums is nothing if not a realist, eh, Shelley?"

"I liked the tale of the Feast," Shelley said to me. "Perhaps you will tell it to Mary when she comes over, without adding the —unimproving tailpiece." His gentle manner of saying it robbed the remark of any reproof it might otherwise have carried.

"I'll be delighted to meet her."

"She'll be here in an hour or so, when she has dried off from her boat trip with Polidori. And when she has fed our little William and tucked him into bed."

That name—little William! —recalled me to more serious things. The sick, chiselled visage of Frankenstein returned before my eyes. I fell silent. The two poets talked together, the dogs slunk back into the room and fought under the window, the fire flickered. The rain fell. The world seemed very small. Only the perspectives of the poets were large; they had a freedom and a joy in speculation—even when the subject of speculation was a gloomy one—which steadied one's faith in human culture. Yet I could see in Shelley some of Victor's nervous mannerisms. Shelley looked like a haunted man. Something in the set of his shoulders suggested that his pursuers were not far behind. Byron slouched back solidly in his chair, but Shelley never kept still.

A servant was summoned. The laudanum bottle was brought out. Byron tipped it gently into his brandy. Shelley consented to having a draught in wine. I took another glass of wine myself.

"Ah, a man can drown in this stuff!" said Byron, appreciatively sipping.

"No, no, you need a whole lake to drown properly," said Shelley. "In this stuff you *float*!" He rose and began to dance round the room. The dogs yapped and growled about his heels. He ignored them, but Byron lurched to his feet with a bellow. "Get those mankey hounds out of my room!"

As the servant was kicking them out, Mary Godwin entered, and I found myself flushing—part with the wine, no doubt, but mainly with the agonising exhilaration of confronting the author of "Frankenstein or, The Modern Prometheus".

VIII.

To see her standing there! Although my emotions were engaged, or perhaps because they were en-

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gaged, a flash of revelation lit my intellect. I perceived that the orthodox view of Time, as gradually established in the Western world, was a mistaken one.

Even to me then, it was strange that such a perception should dawn at that moment, when dogs were barking, wind was blowing in, everyone was making a hubbub, and Mary Shelley stood before me. But I saw that time was much more like the growth of Mary's reputation, devious and ambiguous, than it was like the straight line, moving remorselessly forward, which Western thought has forced it to prefigure.

That straightness of Time, that confining straightness, was one with the Western picture of setting the world to rights. Historically, it was easy to see how it had arisen. The introduction of bells into all the steeples of Christendom had been an early factor in regularising the habits of the people—their first lesson in working to the clock. But the greatest advance in regularity was soon about to descend on the world in which I found myself: the introduction of a complex railway system which depended on exact and uniform timing over whole countries, not on the vagaries of a church steeple or a parson's watch. That regularisation would reinforce the lesson of the factory siren: that to survive, all must be sacrified to a formal pattern imposed impersonally on the individual.

The lesson of the factory siren would be heard too in the sciences, leading to the horrible clockwork universe of Laplace and his successors. That image of things would dominate men's notions of space and time for more than a century. Even when nuclear physics brought what might seem less restrictive ideas, those ideas would be refinements on, and not a revolution against, the mechanistic perception of things. Into this strait-jacket of thought, Time had been thrust. It had come to the stage in 2020 when anyone who regarded Time as other than something that chould be measured precisely by chronometer was shunned as an eccentric.

Yet—in the coarse sensual world over which science never entirely held sway, time was always regarded as devious. Popular parlance spoke of Time as a medium wherein one had a certain independence of movement quite at variance with scientific dogma. "You're living in the past." "He's before his time." "I'll knock you into the middle of next week." "We are years ahead of the competition."

The poets had always been on the side of the people. For them, and for some neglected novelists, Time would always be a wayward thing, climbing over life like a variagated ivy over some old house. Or like Mary Shelley's reputation, cherished by few, but always there, diversifying.

She went over to Shelley and gave him a book, telling him that Claire Clairmont was sitting by little William—'Willmouse', she

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called him—and writing letters home. Shelley started to question her about Tasso's "Gerusalema Liberata", but Byron called her over to him.

"You may give me a kiss, dear Mary, since it is soon to be your birthday."

She did kiss him, but somewhat dutifully. He patted her and said to me, "Here you see the advantages of heredity nobly exemplified. This young lady, Mr. Bodenland, is the product of the union of two of the great minds of our time, the philosopher, William Godwin, and Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the great philosophical female minds to rank with my friend, Madame de Stael—who lives just across the lake, as you may know. So we have here beauty and wisdom united, to everyone's great advantage!"

"Do not let Lord Byron prejudice you against me, sir," said Mary, smiling.

She was petite. She was fair and rather birdlike, with brilliant eyes and a small wistful mouth. As with Shelley, she was irresistible when she laughed, for her whole countenance lit up—she gave you her enjoyment. But she was much more still than Shelley, and on the whole very silent, and in her silence was a mournful quality. I could see why Shelley loved her—and why Byron teased her.

One thing struck me about her immediately. She was amazingly young! Later, I saw by a date in a book that she was not yet eighteen. The thought went through my mind, she can't help me!—It must be years yet before she will come to write her masterpiece.

"Mr. Bodenland can tell you a story about little children and graves," Shelley told her. "It will make your flesh creep!"

"I couldn't tell it again, even for such worthy ends," I said to her. "It would bore the rest of the company even more than it did the first time."

"If you are staying some time, sir, you must tell it to me privately," Mary said, "since I am getting up shop as a connoisseur of grave stories."

"Mr. Bodenland is a connoisseur of the Swiss weather," Byron said. "He believes it was the cannon at Waterloo which caused the clouds such haemorrhage!"

Before I could protest at the misrepresentation, Mary said, "Oh, no, that's not so at all—that's a very unscientific remark, if you don't mind my saying so, sir! The bad weather universal in the northern hemisphere this year is entirely attributable to a phenomenal volcanic explosion in the southern hemisphere last year! Isn't that interesting? It proves that winds are distributed all over the globe, and that the whole planet enjoys a circulatory system like—"

"Mary, dear, you upset *my* circulatory system when you parade these ideas you pinch from Percy," Byron said. "Let the weather get into anything but *not* the claret and the conversation! Now, Shelley, tell me what you were reading when

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you were skulking in the woods today."

Shelley put ten long fingers to his chest and then flipped them up at the ceiling. "I was not in the woods. I was not on Earth. I had fled the planet entirely. I was with Lucian of Samosata, adventuring on the Moon!"

They began a conversation on the advantages of lunar life; Mary stood meekly beside me, listening. Then she said to me, quietly so as not to disturb the talk, "We shall eat mutton tonight—or Lord Byron and Polidori will, for Percy and I avoid meat. You must join us, if you will. I am just going to see if the cook is attending to the vegetables." With that she went towards the kitchen.

Mention of Polidori reminds me that the little Italian doctor had entered with Mary. No one had taken any notice of him. Even I forgot to note it. He had poured himself some wine and gone over to the fire to drink it. Then, evidently annoyed about something, he'd tramped upstairs to his room.

Now he suddenly reappeared, clad in nothing but a pair of nankeen trousers, rushing down the stairs and levelling a pistol at my head!

"Ho, ho! A stranger in our midst! Hold, signor, how did you get into Diodati! Fiend or human, speak or I shoot!"

I jumped up in fright and anger. Shelley too leaped to his feet, shrieking, and knocked his chair over, so that Mary came running back into the room.

Only Byron was unmoved. "Polly, stop behaving like a demented Tory at Calais! You are the stranger here, the fiend of Diodati. Kindly take yourself back upstairs and shoot yourself very very quietly, depositing your carcass somewhere where it will not annoy us!"

"It's a joke, Albe, isn't it? It's just my Latin temperament, like your Albanian songs, isn't it?" The little doctor looked from one to the other of us, all concern, hoping for support.

"As you well know, Polly, neither Lord Byron nor I have any sense of humour, being British," said Shelley. "Kindly desist! You know how bad my nerves are!"

"I'm so sorry—"

"Dematerialise!" shouted Byron.

As the man fled back upstairs, Byron added, "Heavens, but the man is stupid!"

Mary said, "Even the stupid hate being made to look foolish!"

The rain having petered out for a while, we all went out to stare at the sunset, about which the two poets made lurid remarks. Claire Claremont arrived, giggling and nuzzling up to Byron when she could in a manner distinctly unlike her half-sister's. I thought she was a silly girl, and judged that Byron thought the same; but he was a lot more patient with her than he had been with Polidori.

Nothing pleased me more than to be allowed to take supper with them. They were interested in my

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opinions but not my circumstances, so that I did not have to invent any tales about my past. Polidori came down to supper and sat next to me without saying anything. He and I were eating heartily when Byron threw down his fork and cried, "Oh for the horrors of polite society again! At least they knew how to treat meat! This is a mockery of mutton!"

"Ah," said Shelley, looking up from his carrots, "Lam-poon!"

"That's a very beefy pun for a vegetarian!" said Byron, laughing with the rest of us.

"In a few generations, all mankind will be vegetarian," said Shelley, waving a knife through the air. His conversation changed course with his moods. "Once it is generally realised that the animals are such close kin to us, then meateating will be disdained as too near to cannibalism for comfort. Can you imagine what a civilizing effect that will have on the multitude? A hundred years from now, the march of the physical sciences—oh, Albe, you should have talked to old Erasmus Darwin about that subject! He foresaw the time when steam would invade every domain—"

"Just as it invaded this mutton?"

"Steam is the basis of all the present-day improvements. Mind you, it's only the very beginning of a revolutionary improvement in all things. We who have harnessed steam are now harnessing gas as another powerful servant. And we are merely the precursors of generations who will harness the great life-force of electricity!"

"Well, that's pretty good going," said Byron. "That's Air, Water, and Fire. What are our enlightened descendants going to do about the fourth element, Earth? Will they find some use for it, other than burying mouldy bodies in it?"

"The Earth will be free to everyone. Don't you see? Mary, you explain! With the elements as slaves, then for the first time in history slavery will be abolished. Human servitude will disappear, for servitors in the form of machines, powered by steam and electricity, will take over. And that means that a day of universal socialism will dawn. For the first time, there will be no masters and inferiors. All will be equal!"

Byron laughed and stared down at his boots. "I doubt God ever intended that! He gives no sign of it!"

"It's not *God*'s intentions! It's *Man*'s intentions! As long as Man's intentions can be made to be good. . . It's Man that has to put Nature right, you know, and not vice versa. We are all responsible for this fabulous world on which we have been born. I see the time coming when the human race will rule as it should rule, as benevolent gardeners, with a great garden in its care. And then perhaps, like the adventurers of Lucian, we can skip to the Moon and cultivate that. And the other planets of the Sun."

"Don't you think mankind will have to change its basic nature a little before that happens, Percy?"

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Mary said timidly. Her eyes had rarely left his face, although he was now tramping about the room, gesticulating as he talked.

"His nature *will* be changed by the changes he has already set afoot!" cried Shelley vehemently. "The old rotten complacent eighteenth-century order is gone for ever—we are marching towards an age, a realm of science, in which goodness will not be trampled underfoot by despair! Everyone will be a voice to be heard!"

"What a Babel that will be! Your vision of the future frightens me," Byron said. "What you predict is very well, and good for the intellectual pulses. What's more, I'd love you to lecture to my confounded wife in that fashion and tell her that *her* rotten complacent way of life is over. But I don't aspire to your Promethean vision of man. I see him as a servile little bugger! You spell him with a capital M, as in Murray; to me he is very lower case. You see despair as something that can be rooted out by machines—some sort of a steam-shovel, perhaps. But to me despair is a permanent part of man, induced by that spectre of three-score years and ten. How can physical science change that unpleasant situation?

"The natural order of things, with all its makeshift arrangements, I agree, is to be railed at. Youth, for instance, is something that should be awarded after a rather stiff examination to men of experience, not wasted on mere boys. But you would hand over the natural order to be managed by Parliament. Think how much worse that order would be if administered by the Norths and Castlereaghs of tomorrow!"

"What I'm saying, Albe, is that machines will free all men, all the 'mute inglorious Miltons' of Gray's poem. And then there will not be room at the head of a reformed social system for duds and vipers like North or Castlereagh. Ability will be able to speak unmuffled, honesty will be respected. Youth will not be shackled, because the distortions of the present order will be abolished, utterly abolished!"

His eyes gleamed. He stood over Byron, searching Byron's face. For all his dilettante airs, I could see that Byron too was all-absorbed in the theme.

"Is it possible that machinery will banish oppression?" he asked. "The question is whether machines strenghten the good or the evil in man's nature. So far, the evidence is not encouraging, and I suspect that new knowledge may lead to new oppression. The French Revolution was intended to remedy the natural order, but it changed very little. It certainly did not stop the corruption of power!"

"But that is because the French still insist on having a top and bottom. Socialism will change all that! Just remember, it is the present order which is unnatural. We are working towards a more natural order, where inequality is done away with. By the time you and I are old men—"

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"I'll have shot myself before that!"

"By the time this century is finished—the whole planet, well, little Willmouse will live to see it, let's hope. . . There are entirely new powers hovering in the air, condensing in the future, lurking in the minds of men, which can be summoned as Prospero summoned Ariel!"

"Don't forget he summoned Caliban, too! What happens if these new powers are seized by those in power already—who, after all, are in the best position to seize them?"

"But that is why we need a new social order, Albe! Then the new power goes to all alike. What do you say to all this, Mr. Bodenland?"

Shelley suddenly swung his luminous face towards me, sat quickly down on a chair, sticking out one leg and resting a hand on its thigh, clearly inviting me to hold the floor awhile.

After all, thought I, I was the best qualified of those present to speak on the subject of the future. And what a pleasure to speak to such receptive minds! I glanced at Mary. She was standing by Shelley, listening intently but saying nothing.

"In one major respect, I'm sure you're right," I said, addressing myself to Shelley. "The new systems of machines now coming in have great power, and it is a power to change the world. In the cotton towns, you can already see that power-looms are creating a new category of human being, the town labourer. As the machines become more complex, so he will become more of an expert. His experience will become centred on machines; eventually, his kind will become adjuncts of the machine. They will be called 'a labour force'. In other words, an abstract idea will replace a master-man relationship; but in practice the workings of a labour force may be just as difficult."

"But there will be equality—the labour force will control itself."

"No. It will not be freed, because it will generate its own bosses from within. Nor will it be freed by the machines. Instead, a culture will become enslaved by the machines. The second generation of machines will be much more complex than the first, for it will include machines capable of repairing and even reproducing the first generation! Not only will human goodness be unable to operate effectively on such a system: it will become increasingly irrelevant to it. Because the machines in their teeming millions, large and small, will have become symbols of class and prosperity, like horses to Red Indian tribes or slaves to Romans. Their acquisition and maintenance will increasingly occupy human affairs. Creator and created become locked in a life-and-death relationship."

"I suppose it's possible. . . Man may enslave the elements but remain himself a slave."

"Nor must you imagine that all innovations will be fruitful. Im-

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agine. for instance, a flying machine that will transport you from London to Geneva."

"There is a flying machine in Johnson's 'Rasselas'."

"Would you not think that such a machine would greatly open up commerce and cultural relationships between Switzerland and Britain? But suppose instead that the two countries quarrelled because of some misunderstanding—then flying machines would carry weapons of devastation that could blast the two capitals to the ground!"

"Precisely the conclusion that Johnson arrived at," said Byron.

"Yes, and as pessimistic with as little reason," said Shelley swiftly. "Why should Britain and Switzerland fall out?"

"Because the more they become involved in each other's affairs, the more reason they have to fall out. You may quarrel with your neighbour; you are likely to quarrel with someone else's neighbour in the next village. And so in other spheres. The more the complexity of systems, the more danger of something going wrong, and the less chance individual will has of operating on the systems for good. First the systems become impersonal. Then they seem to take on a mind of their own, then they become positively malignant!"

Silence for a moment, while we all gazed meditatively at the floor.

"Then we are heading for a world full of Frankenstein monsters, Mary!" exclaimed Byron, slapping his leg. "For God's sake, let's take another drink, or shoot the dogs, or call Claire in to dance the fandango, rather than indulge ourselves in this misery! Is not the past of the human race gloomy enough for you, without supping upon the imaginary horrors of its future?"

The mention of Frankenstein stopped me in mid-thought. So —was the novel then written? By this slender girl of eighteen!

But the slender girl of eighteen was answering Lord Byron.

"Milton's sympathies would be with you, Albé:

'Let bo man seek

'Henceforth to be foretold what shall befall

'Him or his children. . .'

But my feelings are different, if I may state them. They perhaps correspond in some ways to those of our new friend, Mr. Bodenland. Our generation must take on the task of thinking about the future, of assuming towards it the responsibility that we assume towards our children. There are changes in the world to which we must not be passive, or we shall be overwhelmed by them, like children by an illness of which they have no comprehension. When knowledge becomes formulated into a science, then it does take on a life of its own, often alien to the human spirit that conceived it."

"Oh, yes," I said. "And always the pretence that the innovating spirit is so noble and good! Where's the cellars of creativity are often stuffed with corpses. . ."

"Don't talk to me about corpses!" cried Shelley, jumping up.

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"Who knows but they may be lined up outside that very wall, waiting to flock in on us!" He pointed melodramatically, running a finger along in the air ahead of him, peering with burning eyes as if indeed watching an army of dead, invisible to the rest of us. "I know all about corpses! As the cycles of the air distribute moisture about the planet, so the legions of the dead march underground to distribute life! Do I sound so optimistic that I'm not always conscious of the short step between swaddling-bands and cerements? Mortality—that's always the stumbling-block! Your Frankenstein was correct in his basic idea, Mary—he sought first to create a race free from the bounds of ordinary human weakness! Would I had been so created! How I would stalk the world!"

He gave a great shriek and rushed from the room.

Byron pulled a funny face at Mary. "Think yourself lucky he don't eat meat, ma'am, or there's no knowing what he'd be up to!"

"Percy's so ethereal. I fear the world invisible is more visible to him than to the rest of us. I'd better go and calm him down."

"Mary, dear, one night when I have made a better meal than I did tonight, I plan to go a little berserk, too, in order to have your solace."

She smiled. "Oh, Claire will look after *you*, Lord Byron!"

IX.

THAT NIGHT, I slept in Chapuis! Byron would not have me in the larger house, claiming that the dogs would never tolerate my presence without howling all night. Shelley, ever one to aid society's strays, invited me to his house. So I slept in a little damp attic room which smelt of apples, my head not very far away from the dream-troubled heads of Shelley and his mistress.

Next morning, I was woken by the baby crying. I thought he probably set up a stronger howl than Byron's dogs!

It was a very ill-ordered household, Mary and Claire looking after it between them in a slap-dash way. But I was in a bad mood with myself. I had forgotten my quest on the previous day in the pleasure of the poets' company. Within twenty-four hours, Justine would be hanged, and I had not said a word to anyone about it.

Then I recollected. This was August. Justine had been hanged in May. My time scales were all wrong. There was nothing I could do about the situation. Justine was long since with Shelley's dead, marching underground.

But there was one thing I could do. I could eradicate Frankenstein's monster. If I could borrow a copy of Mary's book, I could map its route, ambush, and kill it!

What would Frankenstein do then? Would he make a second creature? Should I also anticipate that it was my duty to eradicate, not only the monster, but the author of monsters?

I shelved that problem for a later

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date.

One thing you see I had already accepted. I had accepted the equal reality of Mary Shelley and her creation, Victor Frankenstein, just as I had accepted the equal reality of Victor and his monster. In my position, there was no difficulty in so doing; for they accepted my reality, and I was as much a mythical creature in their world as they would have been in mine.

As time was more devious than scientific orthodoxy would have us believe, so was reality still open to question, since Time was one of the terms in its equation.

Neither girl took a great deal of interest in me. Trunks were standing about half-packed, Claire was rushing madly about looking for her bonnet, Mary was trying to comfort Willmouse, who was crying loudly and looked, I thought, rather a little shrivelled thing. Occasionally, I caught glimpses of Shelley through the vines, skipping about in a somewhat girlish manner between the two houses and the little landing stage where their boats were moored; there were a collection of rowing boats and a masted boat with a deck which Claire referred to as 'the schooner'.

The weather was not too bad. A watery sun had come through, and wind was driving the mist away.

"We're all going to sail round to Meillerie while it's fine," Claire said. "I shall take my lute. Lord Byron so loves to hear me play!"

It was obvious I was in the way. If they went sailing, there would be no chance to speak privately to Mary; in two days the Shelley party were leaving here, making for Geneva and thence to London. I crept back upstairs to my little room and spoke my account of the previous day's events into my journal.

In my pocket, I felt a folded piece of paper. It was the manuscript of Lord Byron's poem which I had retrieved from the floor on the previous evening. I smoother it out and read:

I had a dream that was not quite a dream.
The bright sun was extinguished, and the stars
Did rush eternal through the darkling space,
Trackless and rayless, while the frosted earth
Hung blindly rotting in the moonless air.
Morn came and went; and came, bringing no day,
And men forgot their passions in their dread.
Their habitations–lesser things than light–
Were burnt for beacons; cities were consumed,
So men could see one more each other's face.
Forests were set on fire. . .
The meagre by the meagre were devoured, failing. . .
For all were starving by degrees; but two
Of an immense necropolis survived. . .
The world was void, the waves were dead, the tides

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Were stranded since the moon, their mistress, fled.

One mighty city only. . .

Darkness became the Universe. . .

I sat for a long while, clutching the unfinished poem, gazing beyond it. I cannot say what I saw there.

At last I realised that the voices of the Shelley party had faded long since. My room was on the landward side of Chapuis, so in any case I could not have watched the schooner depart. Emptiness filled me. From the depths of my patchy education, I recalled that Shelley had drowned in a storm on a lake. This lake? This day? How urgently I hoped not!

Folding the poem, I laid it on the table. All was silence, except for the creaking tick of a clock. At length I stirred myself. In melancholy mood, I went downstairs. There sat Mary, by the empty grate!

She was perched on the end of a bench. Beside her was a wooden cradle, from which she had taken her baby. She held the child in her arms, having undone the ribbon of her blouse and put a small breast to his mouth. She was rocking him gently as he fed and gazing in abstraction at the far corner of the room.

When she saw me, she smiled and put a finger to her lips, motioning silence. She made no attempt to conceal her appealing expanse of breast. Uncertain about Regency conventions, I was both embarrassed and charmed, but she gestured that I was to stay.

The baby fell asleep at its feed. The nipple popped wetly from its mouth. She tied up her ribbons and laid William gently in the cradle before saying, "I think he will sleep now. The poor little mite has the colic, but I have dosed him up with laudanum."

"I thought you had sailed on the schooner with the others."

"I stayed because little Willmouse is unwell, and he will have trouble enough when we are on our way back to England. I also stayed because I understand you wished to speak with me."

"That was very considerate of you!"

"It was not so much consideration as intuition, for something tells me that you visit me with some strange intelligence."

"Mary—if I may call you that—yes, I have indeed some strange intelligence. But I know you are a girl with a great deal of intuition as well as consideration, and what you say makes my difficult task easier. . ."

I was head and shoulders taller than she, my head knocking against the low rafters. What I could not say was that, as we two stood in the shadowy parlour, I felt considerably within her spell.

The room was almost bare of possessions, apart from their preparations for departure. On the table lay remains of a frugal breakfast; I noticed nothing but bread and tea and some fruit. A German folio lay open at Shelley's place, with a little

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duodecimo in it. The subdued light made Mary appear pale. Her hair was fair, so that I thought for a moment of the other woman I had met recently, Elizabeth Lavenza. But Elizabeth's presence had been chilling; Mary's was of a different quality. Her eyes were grey, her whole expression animated and a little skittish—or so I thought—from the moment she observed me admiring her breast. With me she had none of the shyness she had exhibited in Byron's company the evening before.

Impulsively, I said, "You spoke little during our talk last night. Yet I know you had much to contribute."

"It was my place to listen. And I wished to listen. Shelley was not at his best, yet he always talks so beautifully."

"Yes. He's very optimistic about the future."

"Perhaps he makes it appear so."

A silence fell between us. The baby slept by her feet. Large intangible sensations seemed to rise round us. I could hear the clock ticking again, and the tick of my heart.

"Come and sit by the window with me," she said. "Tell me what it is you wish to say. Is it something about Shelley?. . . No, it is something touching on our conversation last night. You don't know it, but my hair stood on end when you spoke of the future as you did. You conjured up for me the legions of the unborn, and I found them as grisly a sight as the legions of the dead. Although, like Shelley, I am not a believer in the Christian religion—as no intelligent person can be in our day—I do give strong credence to spirits. Until you enlighten me, and perhaps even after that, I shall regard *you* as some kind of spirit."

"That might be the best way to look at it! Maybe I can never convince you that I am other than a spirit, for what I have to tell you is this: that I have come from two hundred years in the future to speak to you—to sit here by this window and talk as we talk now!"

I could not resist letting flattery creep into my tone. Seen in the soft green light of the window, speaking with her serious calm air, Mary Shelley was beautiful to behold. There might be a melancholy here, but there was none of Shelley's madness, none of Byron's moodiness. She seemed like a being apart, a very sane but extraordinary young woman, and a slumbering thing in my breast woke and opened to her.

She said, with a half-laugh, "You must have documents to prove your claim, to show at whatever unlikely temporal frontier-post you came through on your way here!"

"Of course I do, and better than documents. But the document that most interests me is your novel: 'Frankenstein or, The Modern Prometheus'."

"About that, you will have to give me more details," she said

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calmly, gazing at my face. "How you have heard of my story, I do not know, for it lies unfinished upstairs, although I began it in May. Indeed, I may never complete it, now that we have to move back to England to sort out our difficulties there."

"You will finish it! You will! I know as much. I come from a time when your novel is generally acknowledged as a masterpiece of literature and prophetic insight, a time when Frankenstein is as familiar a name to the literate as Gulliver or Robinson Crusoe is to you!"

Her eyes were sparkling and her cheeks flushed.

"My story is famous?"

"It is famous, and your name is honoured."

She put a hand on her forehead.

"Mr. Bodenland, Joe—let's go and walk by the water's edge! I need some physical activity to prove I am not dreaming."

She was shaking. I took her arm as we passed through the door. She closed it and leaned against it, looking up at me in an unconsciously provocative attitude.

"Can it really be as you say, that fame—that vicarious life in another's breath—will be mine in the years to come? And Shelley's? I'm sure *his* fame can never die!"

"Shelley's fame has always been secure and his name forever linked with Lord Byron's." I could see that did not particularly please her, so I added, "But your fame has come to rank with Shelley's. He is regarded as one of the foremost poets of science, and you as the first novelist of science."

"Shall I live to write more than one novel, then?"

"Yes, you will."

"And when shall I die? And dear Shelley? Shall we die young?"

"You will not die before your names are known."

"And will we marry? You know he pursues other women, in his ever-questing way." She was fiddling absently with the ribbons at her bosom.

"You will marry. Your name goes down into the future as Mary Shelley."

She closed her eyes. Tears welled behind her eyelids and trickled down her cheeks. Her whole frame shook. I put my arms about her, and we remained half-leaning against the sun-blistered door.

Of what followed I cannot tell in detail—I dare not put it into words. For we were caught up in a kind of ritual which seemed afterwards to have its formal cadences like a dance. Still crying, she laughed. She clung to me, and then she ran away; she dashed through the flowers in the long grass, she twirled around a tree and sent lizards scuttling, she skipped along a sandy path. She invited me to pursue. I ran after her, caught her hand.

She laughed and cried. "I don't believe it!" she said.

She began to talk rapturously, pouring out speculations about the future, all mixed in with details of her life—which she claimed was deeply unhappy, under a permanent

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cloud because her mother had died giving birth to her.

"But if I am to achieve such merit as wins fame, then my life has not been so unworthy an exchange for hers as I always feared!"

Again she laughed and cried, and I laughed with her. There was a union, a chemical bond, between us, which nature seemed to acknowledge and conspire with, for the wind dropped and the sun blazed forth, and the great hills with their snowy caps shone forth in magnificence. Without conscious intention, I took her in my arms and kissed her.

Her lips were warm and sweet.

She responded before breaking away. Indirectly, she revealed what was in her mind—and mine—by saying, "You know why we must return to England so soon after finding this peaceful sanctuary? Because our dear Claire is with child by Byron. That was no marriage of true minds! But today is our own, so let's keep thought of them out! Come, my messenger, who brings me such reason for deep happiness, we will swim in the lake. You know Shelley cannot swim? I swim here with Byron because I dread to swim alone, and tolerate all his impudent remarks. The water's deep and cold as a grave here! Do you mind? We will turn our backs to each other, and so be polite while we strip."

What man would be feeble enough to resist such a suggestion, or to quarrel with such an arrangement? We were at a little secluded cove, with large boulders strewn about, the debris of some long-past hillside. I could see how clear and pure the water was, how full with fish. There were darting birds in the willow tree overhead. Bees buzzed in the clover. Mary Shelley's lithe figure was revealed by my side.

She entered the water with a small cry at its chill. Splashing her limbs to get used to the cold, she turned and looked at me with a hint of mischief, as I stood naked staring at her. Our gaze met and became an eternal thing. That is how I see her now, turning to look over a white shoulder, with the placid expanse of lake about her. I ran forward and dashed myself into the water with a skimming dive.

After our swim, we ran back to the little villa, laughing and clutching out clothes. She found me a towel upstairs. I did not use it, nor she hers. Instead, we lay on the bed together, embracing, mouth on mouth. Time and the great day fluttered round our bodies.

There was a moment later when I found a willow leaf stuck to her still-moist haunches. "I shall keep it, since it comes from enchanted ground!"

I set it carefully on the edition of Sophocles by her bed, intending to retrieve it later.

"Enchanted indeed! You and I are under an enchantment, Joe. We do not exist in the same world! Both of us are spirits, though you kiss my flesh. And we are swal-

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lowed up from the world, carried in this room to a glade of an enchanted forest, mangificent and unbounded, where stand groves of pine and walnut and chestnut. Nothing can harm us here. The forests are infinite. They go on to the end of the world and the end of eternity. The sun will never swing away from that casement window, for we have abolished time at a stroke, my dearest spirit! I wonder what it would be like if you were the last man in the world, and I the last woman? Unknown to fame, we would see the whole world turn back into an Eden about us. . . But I would be afraid you might die. I'm always so fearful, you know. Only your good news banished my cares for a while. I had a child that died. Flesh is so frail—except yours, Joe! And I fear for Shelley. He's so wild sometimes. You see what a creature of air and light he is, and yet he has his dark side, just like the moon. Oh, my spirit, my other self, make love to me again, if you can! Let your sunlight and my moonlight mingle!"

Ah, Mary, Mary Shelley, how dear you were and are, beyond all women—and yet what was possible then was only possible because we were mere phantoms in the world, or so we saw it, and scarcely less than phantoms to each other. But the solid Swiss world was no phantom, nor would the solar system cease forging steadily through interstellar space: the sun did swing away from our casement, for all Mary said, for all our forgetting of time, and the baby awoke and cried; so that Mary, giving me a langorous look, dressed herself carelessly and descended the stairs. I remember how her dress lit the stairwell, reflecting onto the wall the sunbeams that fell on to it as she descended.

I followed her down. Our movements were like a formal dance, always related to each other. She got William some milk in a ladle from the kitchen. He drank it, she dandled him on her knee; presently his eyes closed and he slept again, so that Mary could return him to his cradle. Then she turned the full beam of her attention on me. Holding each other's hands, we spoke the name that had united us: Frankenstein.

X.

"This is what she said when I asked her how she came to write the novel.

"It began as a horror story in the mode of Mrs. Radcliffe. One evening in Diodati, Polly—Doctor Polidori, whom you saw at his worst last night—brought us a collection of ghostly tales and read the most gory bits aloud to us. It needs very little provocation to start Shelley off on such topics, or Albé either—he particularly enjoys vampire stories. I do no more than listen to them talking. I can't decide whether Albé likes me, or merely puts up with me for Shelley's sake. . .

"Polidori decided that we should

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have a competition, and each write a macabre tale. The three men began on something, although Shelley has little patience with prose. I alone could not start. I suppose I was too shy.

"Or perhaps I was too ambitious. I was impatient of inventing *little frights*, like Polidori. What I desired was a grand conception, one which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature. I have always suffered from nightmares, and at first I thought to press one of them into service, believing that dreams speak from some inner truth, and that in their very unlikelihood lies something more plausible to our inner beings than the most prosaic diurnal life.

"But I was finally inspired by the talk between the two poets. I am certain that you know and revere the name of Dr. Erasmus Darwin in your day. His 'Zoonomia' must always be cherished for its poetic delights as well as its remarkable meditations on the origins of things. Shelley has always acknowledged his debt to the late doctor. He and Byron were discussing Darwin's experiments and speculations on the future, and on the likely possibility of revivifying corpses by electric shock treatments, provided mortification had not set in. Byron said that a number of small machines would be used to set each vital organ going at the same time: one machine for the brain, another a heart-machine, another a kidney-machine, and so on. And Shelley then said that one big engine with various outlets of varying capacities according to the needs of each organ might be used. So they went on developing the idea, and I retired to my bed with those notions in my head.

"I had listened to them spellbound, just as I once, as a small girl, hid behind my father's sofa and heard Samuel Coleridge recite his Ancient Mariner's Rime. There was a nightmare awaiting me that night!

"I could see how the notion of raiding charnel houses for the secrets of life had always been present in Shelley's thought; but these horrid machine speculations were new.

"I slept. I dreamed—and in that dream Frankenstein was born. I saw the engine powerfully at work, its wires running to a monstrous figure, about which the scientist flitted in nervous excitement. Presently the figure sat up in its bandages. At that, the scientist who had played God was dismayed with his handiwork, as was God with our general ancestor, Adam, though with less reason. He goes away, rejecting the power he has assumed, hoping the creation will fall back into decay. But that night, when he is asleep, the creature enters his chamber and rips back his curtain—*so*!—so that he wakes up with a start to find its dreadful gaze upon him, and its hand outstretched for his throat!

"I also started out of my sleep, as you can imagine. Next day, I set myself to writing out my dream, as Horace Walpole did with his dream of Otranto. When I showed my few pages to Shelley, he urged me to

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develop the story at greater length, and to underline the main idea more powerfully.

"That I have been doing, at the same time infusing some of my illustrious father's principles of conduct into the narrative. Indeed, I suppose I owe a great deal to his novel, 'Caleb Williams', which I have read several times with a daughter's care. My poor creature, you see, is not like all the other grim shades who have preceeded him. He has an inner life, and his most telling statement of his ills is embodied in a Godwinian phrase, 'I am malicious because I am miserable'.

"Those are some of the effects which prompted me to write. But, greater than they, is a sort of compulsion which comes on me, so that when I invent I scarcely know what I am inventing. The story seems to possess me. Such power made me uneasy, and that is why I have laid the manuscript by for some days."

She lay back, looking up at the little discoloured ceiling.

"It is a strange feeling, one on which I have known no author to remark. Perhaps it stems from a sensation that I am in some way making a prediction of awful catastrophe, and not just telling a story. If you are from the future, then you must tell me honestly, Joe, if such a catastrophe will take place."

I hesitated before replying.

"You do have true presentiments of doom, Mary. In that way, you are ahead of your age; I come from a civilization long hypnotised by the idea of its Nemesis. But to answer your question. The fame of your novel—when you finish it—will rest in part on its power of allegory. That allegory is complex, but seems mainly concerned with the way in which Frankenstein, standing for science in general, wishes to remould the world for the better, and instead leaves it a worse place than he finds it. Man has power to invent, but not to control. In that respect, the tale of your modern Prometheus is prophetic, but not in any personal way.

"What makes me curious is this. Do you know there is a real Victor Frankenstein, son of a distinguished Syndic of Geneva?"

She looked very frightened, and clung to me.

"I can't bear it if you alarm me! You know my story is an invention, I have told you so! Besides, I set my tale in the last century and not today, because that is a convention which readers like."

"Do you know that your characters are alive today, only a few miles down the road in Geneva? You must know, Mary! You must have read the newspapers and seen that the maidservant, Justine, was on trial for murdering—for murdering one of her charges."

She started to weep, and cry that her life was difficult enough without further complications. I began to comfort her. What started as an innocent embrace grew more intent, as I held her and kissed her lips, soft with crying.

"Percy accuses me of not being

(Cont. on page 108)

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R. FARADAY NELSON

In an earlier incarnation as Ray Nelson, R. Faraday Nelson made his debut more than a decade ago in the pages of The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction *with "Turn Off The Sky," a novella around which flourished much controversy (it was nominated for a Hugo in 1964, but was removed from the ballot before the voting could begin; it also provoked a heavy reader response to the* Magazine *which was later characterized as "90% delighted, the rest incensed"). His second appearance was with "Eight O'Clock in the Morning," which Judith Merril included in her* The 9th Annual of the Year's Best SF. *Two years later he published his last story, "The Great Cosmic Donut of Life," (F&SF, September, 1965) and retired from the scene. Now he returns with the first story in an ambitious undertaking,* The Satyricon Continued, *in which he reintroduces us to that trio of amoral bisexual rascals, Encolpius the heartsick and sometimes impotent narrator, Giton the beautiful boy whom he loves, and Ascyltus his comrade and constant rival. You loved them in the* Satyricon of Petronius*—now join them in—*

THE CITY OF THE CROCODILE

Illustrated by JEFF JONES

I

THE NAKED NEGRESS knelt.

"Beautiful!" signed the slave dealer.

"If the price is right," said I.

He turned to her mother, who crouched on her haunches in the darkest part of the tent as if afraid of the beam of desert sun that beat in through the slightly parted tentflap.

"My dear madam, consider. Though my client. . .". He gestured toward me with a pudgy bejeweled paw. ". . .may seem but a boy, he is clerk to the Chief Administrator of this whole town—such as it is—and enjoys the favor of the Governor of all Egypt, Tiberius Julius Alexander, and of our Lord and Savior, the Divine Emperor Nero. And don't hold out for some unreasonable price. Your daughter should be honored to be purchased by such a fine young man; the philosophers say, madam, that money is soon spent, but honor remains forever."

The old woman glared up at him suspiciously and shook her head. I glared at him too, wiping my sweat-drenched forehead with a scented hankerchief. My friends giggled and exchanged nudges, but I ignored them.

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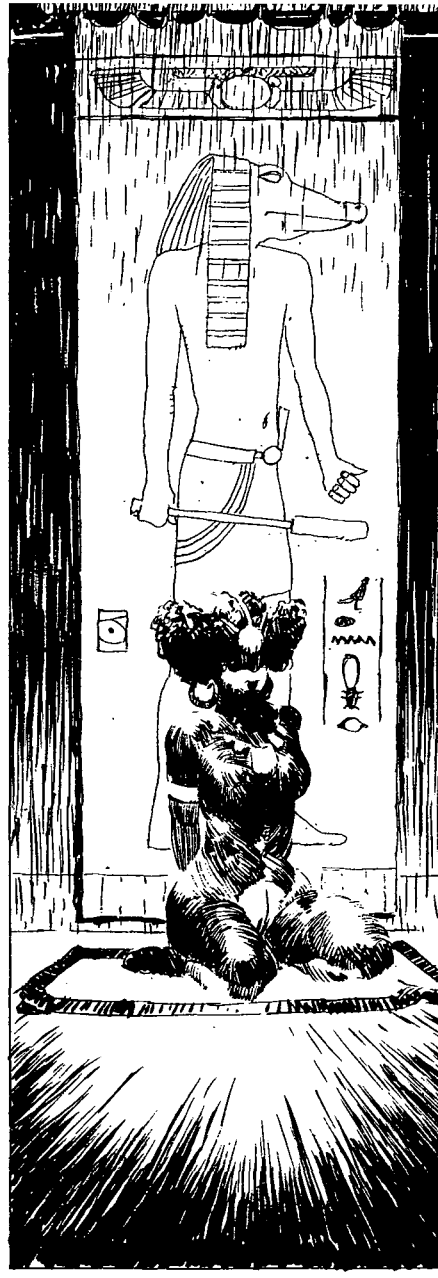
"Consider also, madam," went on the dealer, with a worried glance over his fat shoulder at me, "what the nomadic life of your people will do to her. We must think, you and I, not of our own interests, but of hers. As a mother, which do you think would be better. . .that she should live half-starved, filthy and old before her time in the desert with you, or become the pampered beloved of this kind gentleman here? Why do you hesitate? Your people have been selling daughters to me for years."

The old woman nodded slowly, reluctantly admitting, "Yes, yes, you talk true, but. . ." Her Greek was barbaric; I could hardly understand her. Her daughter, who had not yet spoken, was probably equally stupid, but I thought, *I'm not buying a rhetoric professor.* Besides, when the most dreaded of all man's ills strikes, one takes any available medicine, holding one's nose and praying to all the gods in alphabetic order. I eyed the black girl speculatively. She was indeed beautiful, as the dealer had said. . .a magnificent jungle creature still in her teens, perhaps only two or three years younger than I.

She returned my gaze for an instant, then modestly lowered her eyes. I felt my ears blushing. Yes, she would cure me. . .if anyone could!

"Get on with it, fatso," I told the dealer, giving him an impatient push.

"You see?" he said. "My client is insane with love. In love,



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and who is master?" He opened his small leather moneybag and began throwing coins onto the straw mat beneath his elegantly sandaled feet. One drachma. Two drachmas. Three. Then he paused, looked first at the old woman, then at me.

The old woman pushed the coins away. "You not understand. This girl not good for you. This girl already got husband."

"Then," said the dealer, unruffled. "I should make my offer to *him*." He made no move to pick up the money.

"Her husband not a man." The old woman's eyes widened slightly. *"Her husband a god!"*

My friends laughed outright, but I concealed my smile behind my hankerchief.

The dealer drew himself up haughtily, saying, "Really, madam!"

"Me talk true!" she insisted, rocking on her heels. "This city. You call it Crocodilopolis. We call it Nut Sebek, the City of Sebek. Sebek, he the god of this place. Sebek, he my daughter's husband. Sebek, *he the crocodile god*!"

The daughter spoke now for the first time, sharply, angrily, in some incomprehensible language full of clicks and grunts. The mother listened, then finally nodded.

The daughter sprang to her feet, grinning. "No more talk-talk. I go with you now," she said.

TWO WEEKS LATER I finally managed to escape from my bedroom. and little Giton, helped me to stagger through the long hallways of the Chief Administrator's villa where we were staying and out into the sunny colonnaded courtyard where we could talk without being overheard.

"Encolpius!" Ascyltus spoke to me like an indignant father, though he and I were about the same age. "What have you been doing all this time?"

Straightening up as best I could, I answered, "I've been teaching her Latin, reciting to her the poems of the immortal Gaius Valerius Catullus. . . *'Ave atque vale'*!"

"Hail and farewell," Ascyltus translated. He spoke a cultivated classical Greek that was a delight to the ear except that when excited he tended to lisp a little.

"And," I went on, "his poems of love to the beautiful Lesbia, his sweetheart."

Dear little Giton—that gutter brat—piped up, "And your sweetheart, Encolpius. . .has she made a Lesbian of you?"

"Yes, you fairy queen," taunted Ascyltus, laughing and giving me a shove, "if you're reading poetry to her like some poor eunuch slave, it's obvious your so-called 'cure' is a total flop!"

"No, no," I protested. "I read her the poetry between times! It's the only way I can get a moment's peace. She's been giving me some kind of magic drink that's not only made a man of me, but a superman! Night and day. . . .I just can't stop.

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In fact, I think I'd better be getting back now." I turned to leave.

Ascyltus grabbed my arm, saying, "Wait, you fool. What about your job?"

"Tell them I'm sick," I said, trying to push past him.

"That's a switch," giggled Giton. "When you were sick we had to pretend you were well, and now. . ."

"Let me go!" I snapped.

Ascyltus was getting angry. "If you lose this job, it's back into the streets with the three of us. . .begging, stealing, selling our bodies. . .is that what you want?"

"I don't care," I told him.

But Ascyltus wouldn't let go of my arm. "Encolpius, listen! You have nothing to fear from the Chief Administrator. He's still as drunk as he was the day he hired you, but that swine of a male secretary he's got—the one called Rufus—Rufus has written a letter about you to the Governor. Rufus always hated you, and now he sees his chance to get rid of you. If you don't care what happens to yourself, think about us, your faithful comrades."

Giton, his eyes filled with tears, clutched my other arm and wailed, "Please, Encolpius, if you ever loved me. . ."

I shook them both off and demanded, "Is that all? Are you quite finished?"

They glanced uncertainly at each other, then Ascyltus said, "There is one more thing. Come, I want to show you something." He led me to the other end of the courtyard and pointed at the ground. "There. You see?"

There were crocidile tracks in the dust, and a long waving track that might have been made by a crocodile's tail. "What kind of cheap trick is this?" I shouted. "You made these tracks yourselves!"

"No, no," said Ascyltus. "I swear we didn't! Ever since you brought that woman here, these tracks have been appearing all over the house, but nobody has actually seen any crocodiles. . ."

"Because there aren't any!" I cried triumphantly, then turned my back on them and marched away. Before I went inside, I happened to glance back and behold a sight that once would have made me insane with jealousy. . .Ascyltus holding little Giton in his arms, comforting him, drying his tears. . .but now they might have been two strangers I passed in the marketplace, for all I cared about them.

"Is it night or day?" I asked her.

"I not know," she sighed in the darkness, rolling over to kiss me on the neck. The shutters were closed and the curtains drawn. If I tried hard I could make out the dim looming shapes of the furniture and, of course, the shape of her head as she looked down at me. Somewhere a fly was buzzing.

Laxily I questioned her again. "What's your name?"

"I have tell you already. . .three, four times."

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"Tell me again."

"I am Sebeket Ament."

"What's that mean?"

"That mean 'Wife of Sebek, the Westerner'."

"I'll call you Ament. That sounds like 'love' in Latin."

"It mean 'dead" in our language. Ament. That means dead person. That means person who lives in Amenti, the Western Land, the Land of the Dead, the Land of our Ancestors that long ago sank under the sea far to the west of Egypt. My husband is Sebek. He is dead."

"Then he won't hurt me."

She chuckled. "Not if you don't hurt me. Dead people not jealous. Dead people not hate. Only people who hate are people who afraid, and dead people got nothin' to be afraid of. But if you hurt me, then you better watch out."

I laughed. "I'll never hurt you. You can trust me."

"Ament hope so." She sat up. "We can visit my husband. I think he like to meet you."

"What?" I sat up too, alarmed.

"Drink this." She gave me a cup with some sort of liquid sloshing in it. I hesitated, then thought *If she was going to poison me, she would have done it by now.*

I drained the cup.

I don't remember too clearly what happened next. It seems to me there was a vast city on the ocean floor, all made of green crystal, and Ament led me drifting by the hand into a great hall where battalions of crocodiles in helmet and armor stood at attention, all in a dim shadowless green light. She led me to a jeweled throne, and someone was sitting on that throne, but for some reason my mind refuses to visualize that person, or god, or whatever it was.

Then there was a string of confused adventures, and finally I was in bed again, gazing through half-open eyes at the floor.

Suddenly I sprang to my feet shouting, "WHAT WAS THAT?"

"What was what?" demanded Ament sleepily.

"I saw something sticking out from under the bed! It looked like a big fat scaly. . .*tail*!"

"I don't see nothin'."

"It's gone now."

"You not worry. Magic drink sometime make you see things that not there."

II

THE SCROLL WAS SIGNED by the Governor of Egypt, personally. There, in black and white, was his autograph, "Tiberius Julius Alexander." The finest Augustan papyrus. . .a solid gold rod. . .

I set it down on my desk and stared blankly at Ascyltus, who had delivered it to me there in my office. I could tell by his face he had read it before me. I walked quickly to the door and glanced up and down the hall. No eavesdroppers. Ascyltus and I were alone and could talk freely.

"He tells you to get rid of her," he said, with considerable satisfac-

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tion.

"But what, exactly, does he mean by that? We've lived among lawyers and philosophers, my dear Ascyltus. We know how many different meanings a seemingly simple statement can have. Take the word used here in the scroll for the instrument of punishment to be used on me if I refuse to obey. 'Crux.' A common Latin noun. . .it might mean a cross-shaped object, or then again it might mean a gallows from which one might be, as it were, hung. It could also mean simply trouble or misery, if used in the broadest sense. However, since Greek, not Latin, is the language spoken at the Governor's court in Alexandria, this 'crux' might be a translation of the Greek noun 'stauros', which denotes, primarily, an upright pole or stake such as is, on the one hand, used in the stockade around a temporary fort, or on the other hand, is used to nail up or, at times, to impale malefactors. 'Crux' might also be a translation of the Greek word 'xylon', meaning nothing more than a simple tree or piece of wood. What think you, Ascyltus?"

He considered a moment, then concluded, "In my experience of official documents, I've found that in every case of doubtful meaning, the worst meaning is the right one. The Governor undoubtedly has in mind the impaling stake. You'll be run through like a pig on a spit!" These final words contained an undertone of unmistakeable glee.

"I suppose you're right," I agreed gloomily. "Why does he pick on me now? I've started working again. . .at least one or two days a week."

"Orders are orders," said Ascyltus. "Just take her back to her mother and leave her there."

"But Ascyltus, will I be able to leave her there? What if she begs and pleads? What if she cries?"

"What if she starts acting sexy?" added my comrade maliciously.

"By the gods, what then? I have no practice at resisting temptation. I'm weak, Ascyltus, weak!"

"You certainly are," he agreed, slapping me on the back.

LYING BESIDE ME in the darkness, Ament said, "Yes, among my people a woman can have two husbands. . .even three or four. Nobody says anything."

"Then," I said, "you could be married to both Sebek and me at the same time?"

"Oh yes. That easy. Gods don't count." Her rich contralto laugh reverberated through the room.

"Then let's get married, Ament."

"When?"

"Right now, right here, just you and I."

She laughed again, more gently. "I like that. Good." She slipped her arms around me and kissed my lips for a long time.

Once, as an exercise, I'd memorized the entire marriage ceremony. Now I recited it to Ament, taking first the part of the groom, then the part of the priest,

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alternating as I went. All Ament had to do was say "I do" in the right places.

In no time we'd reached the last few words.

". . .until death do us part," I said.

"I do," she said.

As I kissed her I picked up my dagger from the floor beside the bed, and when the kiss was done I slit her throat from ear to ear with a swift and expert slash.

I wept shamelessly as I wiped my blade on the bedclothes, then, when I could speak again, I quoted the only poet whose greatness was equal to the occasion, the immortal Catullus.

"*Ave atque vale*," said I, brokenly.

ASCYLTUS AND GITON rolled on the floor with laughter.

"You believed it!" they screamed. "You actually believed it! What a dumb armer you are! What an idiot!"

Ascyltus came over and sat beside me on the bed, holding his earthenware lamp close to my face so he could see my expression. "Tell the truth, Encolpius," he said, controlling his laughter with considerable effort. "Did you really believe the Governor of Egypt would send you a personal letter? That a big man like that would concern himself with your silly little sins?"

I didn't answer. I couldn't.

III

WHAT IS WORSE, impotence or boredom? Answer: both! Ever since poor Ament had her accident, I had been even more bored and impotent than before I bought her. Not even sweet Giton could raise the fire in me. I worked and slept. That was all. But worse even than the impotence and boredom of the days was the terror of the nights, and the dreams darkness brought me. She was always waiting for me as soon as my weary eyelids closed, more beautiful and exciting than she was in life and twice as clever. (She had learned, in the Other World, to speak a most excellent Latin.) I had to watch my step constantly to avoid the traps she set for me in the Western Land. . . I was particularly careful not to eat any of the food offered me there. Always hovering in the background was the shadowed figure of Sebek, the Crocodile God, the eater of souls, waiting patiently for me to make a mistake.

Then the day came when I saw her in broad daylight.

I was laboring over a column of figures on my wax tablet and abacus when I glanced out the window and there she was, Sebek at her side, standing on the dunes to the west where the cultivated fields end and the desert begins, shimmering in the heat. She raised her hand and beckoned. I tried to ignore her and go on with my work, but I couldn't help glancing in her direction from time to time.

The first time I looked I said to myself, "It's just a mirage."

The second time I looked I said

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to myself, "It must be Giton in black body paint and Ascyltus in a crocodile suit."

The third time I looked there was nobody there.

When I told Giton and Ascyltus about it, they got so worried about me they pooled their pittances and bought me a blonde.

THE BLONDE, a noble valkyrie-type imported nordic they'd gotten at a discount because she sunburned too easily, lasted one night. In the morning, when I awoke, I found parts of her body all over the room and the bed soggy with blood.

I ran to the baths, thankful that it was so early nobody would be there to see me, and washed myself again and again until there was no trace of blood on me, then I threw on tunic, sandals and cloak and burst in on Ascyltus and Giton. I found them, as you may have guessed, in the same bed, but what did that matter to me now?

"Get dressed," I commanded them as they rubbed their eyes. "We're leaving."

"Where. . ." began Giton sleepily.

"Down the Nile to Alexandria," I told him as I paced back and forth. "From there we'll take ship to Rome."

"A Mediterranean cruise," breathed Ascyltus, a far-away look in his eye. "But. . ." He was suddenly awake and serious. ". . .that costs money!"

"I know where the boss hid some of his bribes," I reassured him impatiently. "That senile alcoholic will never miss them."

By noon we were on board a twenty-four oar galley far downriver from the City of the Crocodile, reclining and watching the passing palms. Airily I called to the old Greek at the steering oar, "What's your name, my good man?"

He replied in a gloomy basso profundo, "I am called Charon, after the boatman who ferries the dead to the Western Land."

IV

THE ROMAN MAGISTRATE leaned forward on his throne, stroking his chin and frowning. "And you've decided to make no defense at all of your actions?"

I nodded.

A murmur of mild surprise spread through the courtroom until the Centurion thumped his spear for silence. I thought, *In jail I'll be safe*. I'll be safe from that claw that clutched my ankle that night on the dock in Alexandria; safe from the woman I saw walking toward me on the water, half-transparent against the Mediterranean sunset; safe from the swimming shapes I'd seen under the wake of the ship; safe from things that left damp trails across my stateroom floor while I slept; and which again and again invaded my dreams. When the soldiers had come aboard the grainship at the city of Ostia, just a few miles short of Rome, I had let them arrest me without a struggle while Ascyltus and Giton dove over

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the side and got away. I just didn't care any more.

That's why, when I finally reached Rome, I was in chains.

"You've murdered two slavegirls," went on the magistrate, settling back in his chair and examining the scroll on which my crimes were listed. "We'll let that pass. If we were to punish the murder of slaves, we'd have half of Rome before the bench."

There was a ripple of laughter. The Centurion thumped for silence again.

The magistrate continued, "And it says here that you stole from your employer. We'll let that pass, too. I know your boss, and he's a bigger thief than you could ever hope to be. But now we come to a more serious charge. In fact, I hesitate to mention it before decent ladies and gentlemen." He glanced around the court with a mocking smile. "It says here you quit your job without giving notice. I'm sure that this charge, at least, you'd like to deny."

I shook my head.

"By the gods, sir," he said, drawing himself up with dignity, "you leave me no choice but to declare you guilty on a plea of *nolo contendere*. What do you say to that?"

"Send me to prison for the rest of my life," I muttered. "It doesn't matter."

"To jail you say? Call me old-fashioned, but I still believe in the Republican virtues of our forefathers and in the Death Penalty they so wisely decreed. You'll learn that life is worth fighting for if you have to defend yours in the arena!"

His closing remarks were drowned out by the general applause. I gathered, however, that I was going to be thrown to some sort of wild beasts as part of a gladiatorial spectacle.

"Crocodiles?" I asked my guard as I was led away.

"You guessed it!"

THE MIDAFTERNOON SUN danced like flame on the water of a huge artificial lake. On the opposite shore (which was also artificial) two square-rigged fighting galleys rode at anchor, waiting for the full-scale sea battle that would be the high point of the day's entertainment. On my left and on my right sat the restless crowd on the long sides of the oval arena; I could hear the distant cries of the vendors who wandered up and down the aisles selling cheap and only slightly poisonous foods to the multitude. They were getting tired of waiting, and so was I.

I stood up and shouted, "Let's get on with it!"

"What's your hurry, sweetheart?" jeered a nearby guard.

I sat down again, thinking, *He's calling me sweetheart because I'm dressed as the sacrificial virgin.* I was, according to the script, going to play the part of the fair maiden sacrificed to the gods to signal the beginning of the sea battle. It was only a cameo role, but I had been instructed to turn in a bravura per-

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formance. The director had shown me just how to walk, with a delicate mincing step, and just the right high-pitched voice to scream in as I plunged into the water. Because of the distance of the audience, a broad and sweeping, rather than a subtle and intimate, acting style was to be desired.

The band began to play a discordant fanfare, but because of the distance I could only clearly hear the tuba and bass drum. That was my cue. I stood up, nervously smoothing my long blond wig and my lovely green silk gown, wishing with all my heart for a mirror.

"Okay sweetheart," called the guard. "Do your stuff!"

I was barefoot, and I rose gracefully onto my toes and glided forward, batting my eyelashes furiously. I was doing fine when that damned guard poked me in the posterior with his spear. I was so startled I lost my balance and tumbled head over heels off the platform and down, down, down into the pool, completely forgetting to scream properly.

When I surfaced, sputtering and blowing, the laughter of the mob was like rolling thunder all around me and suddenly, for the first time that day, I was really afraid. Cursing under my breath, I tore off the wig and gown that now were becoming heavy with water and weighing me down. When I was nude I twisted, trying to see how badly the guard had hurt me. It was only a small cut, but I was bleeding. . .the blood drifted from my flesh like smoke. That idiot! Ruining my performance like that! Then I realized he'd only been doing what he was told. I had to bleed a bit, of course, to attract the crocodiles.

A hush fell over the spectators. They all looked toward the opposite shore, and I turned to look too. Four huge doors had opened in the scenery and out of the darkness, blinking and swishing their tails angrily, came the crocodiles, a herd of the biggest, meanest-looking brutes I'd ever seen. A mighty cheer went up as they floundered in and came swimming toward me.

One voice was shouting louder than all the rest, a voice I recognized instantly. It was Ascyltus!

In a moment I'd located him in the stands, and there was Giton sitting beside him, looking scared. Ascyltus, however, was standing on his bench wildly cheering for. . .the crocodiles!

"*Down the hatch, you scaly rascals*!" he screeched, waving his arms.

The philosophers urge us to treat good fortune and bad with equal indifference and I have spent my entire life attempting to follow their advice, but were they, as they spoke these gentle words, swimming in a crocodile tank while all Rome (including their dearest friends) howled for their blood? Yet still I am ashamed to admit that at that moment I—yes I the brave and honest Encolpius—I lost some measure of my gentlemanly composure. In fact. . .in fact that very

(Cont. on page 83)

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In this, Alan Burhoe's first story for us, he considers Robert E. Howard's murky morality, while the shade of Conan looks on. "Actually," Burhoe tells us, "I don't intend the story to be anti-Howard. He dealt powerfully with the theme of a man from a matriarchal background in struggle for his own manhood." But what is "manhood"? Can it be defined only in terms of–

HIS LAST AND FIRST WOMEN

B. ALAN BURHOE

Illustrated by JOHN T. SWANSON II

I

thief, corsair, outlaw chief. . .

CIRNON LOOKED UP at the grim black walls of the Milgut Pass. They towered above him and almost seemed to close together. A thin strip of swirling, brooding clouds scudded above making the defile a haunted place of shadows gray and black. Beneath great brows, the sullenness in his blue eyes gave way to a momentary softness.

"I remember. Aye, I remember." His voice was a low rumble, like that of an ice lion.

A cold autumnal wind came down the pass to test him, slashing through his body like knives of tundra-tested ice. He faced those winds with a high-mettled laugh and naked breast—and then broke.

Shivering, his left hand let go of the pommel of his chipped broadsword where it rested against his side and pulled his barbarian's leathers and an undyed wool blanket about his giant frame. He bowed his head, letting the old wooden helmet, dull with its surface of cracked varnish, help shield him from the northern wind. His great mane of gray-streaked yellow whisked across his face and he welcomed its blanketing.

Rheumatism, the price of childhood days spent naked in icy streams, suddenly twisted his body into a gnarled form and vented a low moan. Now that he was entering the mountained north country of Tapial, his home and native land, even the rune-carved circlets of copper about his wrists could no longer ease the rheumatic agony.

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Still, he would not be turned away from his Tapial. He kicked his mount, a horned pome as aged as himself, and rode wearily but still with hope through the pass.

HE HAD SCARCELY entered the conifer forest beyond the pass when he came to a conical hut of pine boughs on an alder-stick frame. A girl sat before a fire in the hut's round entrance way. She held a crossbow, which was aimed at him.

"Easy, girl," he rumbled. "Though I come here from the sorcerous south, I am no southlander." He wondered what she was doing here, a lone girl so close to the land of her enemies.

"Who are you, then?" She stood up, legs apart, her bow still aimed steadily at his chest. She had long, straight hair of sunny yellow, aglow now in the light of cloudy sunset and greenwood fire. Her eyes were like the summer sky. She wore a jacket and a long skirt of yellow softhide, decorated with silver and bronze and colored threading. Her voice was assured and soft and strong and something in it attracted him.

"I am called Cirnon."

"Cirnon. A common name. I am Shylda." She said nothing more but stood as she was. Apparently the next move was his. Then he remembered a word of his people that he hadn't voiced for a long, long time:

"*Surancee,*" he said. Peace.

She lowered her bow. "Peace. Come share my fire, old one. I

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have some tea on the brew."

Old one! That stung him. And yet—

He dismounted, leaving his pome saddled but free to wander off in search of dry grass.

"What have you heard of that great one with your name?" she asked. "Cirnon the Barbarian, once Emperor of Yemalinn?"

Gratefully, although his face didn't show it, he squatted down in the tiny world of glowing heat that had the fire as its flickering core. The rheumatism faded away and his joints moved again without complaint.

He said, "Very little. I travel alone and hear few tales."

Shylda reached into the hut and brought out two wooden cups carved like the skulls of firedrakes. She filled them from the open pot that bubbled over the fire and handed one to him.

He drank the bitter tea. Its taste was a memory.

"He came from just north of here," she said.

"Who?"

"Cimon. *The* Cirnon, that is."

"Did you know him?" he asked. This girl was here for some purpose. And since he sensed no danger from her, he decided to play her game until he became tired of it.

Shylda laughed. "I am too young. It was almost forty years ago when he left the fort of his people and rode south to seek adventure. I was born after he had already passed through here and he has never been back. It is commonly told that his first great adventure occurred at the other end of this very forest, where he slew six Yemalinnian merchants who were attempting to have their way with a mountain woman. Whether he killed them to save the woman or to trade his bronze ax for a merchant's stronger broadsword of steel is still argued among the people of this valley. The skulls of those merchants still hang beside the trail where the battle was waged."

Cirnon finished his tea and poured some more for himself. "A man best not met in battle," he commented. He looked at the girl's face and her form beneath the soft-hide. She would be lean and strong; a lioness, wild—especially when compared to the soft, dusky women he had become accustomed to. She looked not even close to twenty years and yet her forest life had given her a feline assurance in the way she moved and didn't move. Shylda. He liked the name.

"We live on the tales of our Cirnon. Have you none to add?" She tilted her head sideways and she smiled and he thought there was something secretive in that smile.

"Another tale? No." *I am a maker of tales, girl; not a teller.*

Shylda sighed, still smiling. "Ah. Still, it is enough to think upon the familiar stories. The bloody battles. The women. How he grew tired of the mercenary's life and made himself emperor. I often wonder how he could have been content with those throne

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years. But—now he is an old man and perhaps it is better not to know—''

''Old!? Again—old.'' In his rage, the barbarian stood up, reaching his full height, as straight and tall and strong as when he had departed from his people. He threw aside the graybeard's blanket and his muscled form was caressed by the firelight.

Her eyes were wider and filled with wonder. ''You—''

''I am Cirnon,'' he rumbled.

Then: she, too, stood before the fire and soon the firelight licked over her own form.

They went into the hut.

II.

general, emperor, and again the thief. . .

IN THE MORNING, Shylda stepped out of the pine hut and whistled. A great golden pome with horns of white pranced out of the forest and went to her.

''I will go with you a distance, mighty Cirnon. There is a friend along the way I want you to meet.''

The day was warm and gentle, more like the summer gone than the winter to come and Cirnon enjoyed their trip over the purple-shrouded forest trails.

Shylda sang songs of their land, songs he hadn't heard since he was a lad, and he was moved. Her beautiful voice added to the song; it was like the sun, making a warm, showery day more beautiful with golden shafts and rainbows. He had to call on all his grim manhood, formed in so many battles, to keep from weeping openly.

At midday, they broke out of the brooding forest into a wide, grassy terrain. In the distance were the great mountains of Tapial, jagged purple teeth against the sky. Just ahead of him stood a split-log cabin. The window shutters were hanging open on cords and he heard the voice of a woman singing at her work.

Shylda nodded toward the cabin. ''Go in.''

Cirnon's brow furrowed. ''Who is she?''

''She has waited for you for so long, Cirnon. To please her, I camped at the pass to await you, for she has some powers of her own and foresaw your return. Go in.''

Cirnon looked about. Six yellow skulls that were swinging in the breeze where they hung from a tree caught his eye. Then he remembered.

He dismounted.

And remembered a despairing cry and his battle rage and the feel of bone crushing beneath his blows and—a girl. What was her name? Sarbitti? No, even before that. Kiassa? No—but closer. El—yes! Elissmer! Sweet Elissmer—prize of his first conquest.

The aroma of baking sweet barley bread greeted him as he stepped through the low doorway.

As his shadow darkened the room, a woman with her back to him stopped her singing and froze.

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Wiping her hands on the front of a long cotton apron, she turned around. She was old. Her hair was white with only a glimmer of gold, her face thin and parched by many hard winters. But her smile was familiar and youthful. The way the corners of her mouth dipped as she smiled let him know that this was indeed Elissmer. He saw the laughing girl of his memories in that face and thought that age had added as much to her beauty as it had taken away.

"Cirnon, I expected you." She spoke calmly, as if he had only been away for a day and they were used to greeting one another thusly. She pulled a bench out from under a low table. "Take seat, warrior. Welcome home."

There was something haunting in the way she looked at him: her eyes smiled, and yet for some other reason than the obvious. She reminded him of someone else even further in his past. He realized suddenly with a touch at his heart that it was his mother.

"Home," he said, savoring the strange word. He sat upon the bench. The air was heady with the smell of the fresh bread and heavy from the glowing heat of the clay oven.

Elissmer opened a trap door in the floor and lifted out a jug of spruce beer. She poured a mug-full for him and sat down on the bench beside him. She touched his mane of hair tentatively. "You have withstood age well considering all you have been through."

"Aye." He drank his beer, looking at the jug which was beading with cool sweat in the heat of the cabin.

"But the scars. I think the legends were true; that Ashmu, Earth Mother, gave you a heart that could never be emptied of blood. For, surely your enemies have cut into you until scars decorate you like colored threads on a wedding skirt."

He laughed. Laughed: partly to think again of battle and partly to remember his own goddesses and force back from his mind the slimed demon-gods of the south.

"Aye, Elissmer, my mountain birth has stood me in good stead. But you, you still live here by yourself where I first found you?"

"I buried my father, whom the Yemalinnians had murdered."

"But you have taken no man for yourself?"

"I had a man, Cirnon. But—" her voice went suddenly cold and Cirnon felt the familiar signal of warning run up his spine. She continued, "He rode away in the morning as if I was nothing to him and I have waited for a long time for him to come back to me—as I knew he would."

Cirnon looked at her.

She sat stiffly beside him, looking at her long fingers, which nervously patted the table.

"Though I am guest in your house, don't play with me, woman," he growled. The beer mug banged on the table to accent his words.

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She turned her head and her blue eyes met and held his. Then she smiled, but it was grim and sad.

"I don't play with you, warrior. I told you when you took me that you weren't yet out of Tapial and that I was no southland woman to have and then to leave. You swore yourself to me that night, Cirnon! You swore yourself to me and I accepted your word. Now—justice is done—for me and for every woman who has made the same mistake with you."

"Done?" Cirnon stood up. It was the sullen-eyed warrior who had led armies to bloody victory and screaming ruin who glared down at her. He looked at the beer jug. He smashed it with one hand. Frothed beer splashed across the table, a dark sea running amidst islands that were fragments of white pottery.

Elissmer gave out a dry laugh. "No, not poison, my warrior. Do you think I have learned the secret arts and helped keep you alive through the most impossible of circumstances to see you die now? My vengeance is complete. But you are not harmed. You have murdered, raped, betrayed those who put trust in you but still I have not harmed you. You can leave freely. See the land of your birth." She got up from the bench and went to the doorway, looking out. "There it is, mighty Cirnon. The land of your birth. How much better for so many if you had never left it."

Cirnon stood watching her, his mind beginning to catch up to what was happening. Elissmer hated him for bedding her and then leaving her. Some women—even mountain women—were like that. Finally, he shrugged.

There would be beer and bread at the nearest fort. And other women. This one, he concluded, had gone mad.

"I'll go, then," he said.

He strode across to the doorway. She blocked his way.

He shook with anger and said irritably and as evenly as he could manage, "If I am not welcome as guest, let me by."

She breathed deeply and looked up at him. She, too, seemed angered. "Aren't you just a bit interested in what arts I have learned in your behalf? In how I have saved your vainglorious life again and again though I was here and you were far away?"

"No. Stand aside."

Again, the cold smile. "It doesn't matter, Cirnon. Only one art matters, that most ancient and allusive one of prolonging youth. No, not my own." Elissmer pointed outside, toward Shylda, who was brushing her pome's coat, still singing a mountain song. The way the girl shook her hips as she worked made him hungry for her again.

Elissmer: "She looks fifteen, does she not? She certainly thinks she is. And yet she is over twice that age. Yes, more than twice fifteen. Don't you know who she is, brave warrior; you who are the only man I have ever lain with? No?"

Cirnon only said, "Stand aside." If she had been a man she would

(Cont. on page 114)

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In introducing Barry Malzberg's "Triptych" (November, 1973), I remarked upon both his cynicism and the fact that his novel, Beyond Apollo, *had won the first John W. Campbell Memorial Award "to what must be his equally cynical delight." Barry writes to say that "My pleasure in the John W. Campbell Award isn't 'cynical;' if I did not, in some real way, feel that I owed much to Campbell and that* Beyond Apollo *came from what he taught us, my taking the award would have been a travesty and an insult to the dead and I would, therefore, have refused it. And that John would not have liked or published the novel (an assumption everyone remarking upon this in print has made) is quite likely but similarly, in my opinion, unfair to his memory. Who can talk for John now? I like to believe that although he might not have been crazy about the book, he would have understood what I was up to." Which not only helps to set the record straight, but introduces–*

AT THE INSTITUTE

BARRY N. MALZBERG

Illustrated by GRAY MORROW

I

"I WANT TO KILL PEOPLE," I say to the interviewer. "I want to chew them up and spit them out. I want to make them hurt bad, worse than they've ever hurt in their lives, and then empty them out. That's what I want," I say. "No more. No other."

There is a pause. The interviewer leans back in his chair and looks for a while out the window, then turns and leans back, the seat clattering. "I see." There is no accusation in his voice. I did not think there would be. The Institute is dispassionate. Impersonal. All of that I know from the brochures and orders. "I see," he says.

"I want to kill. I want to meet them in dark, strange places and show them the knife; see the fear in their eyes and then—"

The interviewer waves me off. He seems impatient, the investigation process having been now completed. "I understand," he says. "Of course you do realize that there's no place for a person with those tendencies in our society. We have emerged from centuries of brutality and neglect only in recent decades by attacking root causes. Your desires are not shameful but we cannot accomodate them. You know that."

"Yes," I say. I have been well briefed. There is no way to lie to the interviewers successfully and I have come to the room resolved then to tell the truth but somehow I was not prepared for disapprobation. "It isn't my fault. I didn't

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want to be this way. It just happened. I have dreams—"

"I know," the interviewer says. He looks out the window again; I wonder what he sees in the courtyard and have a quick apprehension of blood, bones, skulls, corpses lying against the stones, one of the familiar seizures. I close my eyes against this and force the images away. "We're going to have to treat you."

"Yes," I say. "I know of the treatments."

"There is no alternative." The interviewer sighs, he stands, he places his palms flat on the high desk and nods toward the door. Behind me I near attendants entering. I wait for the touch of their hands, thinking of the many ways in which I would like to kill the interviewer.

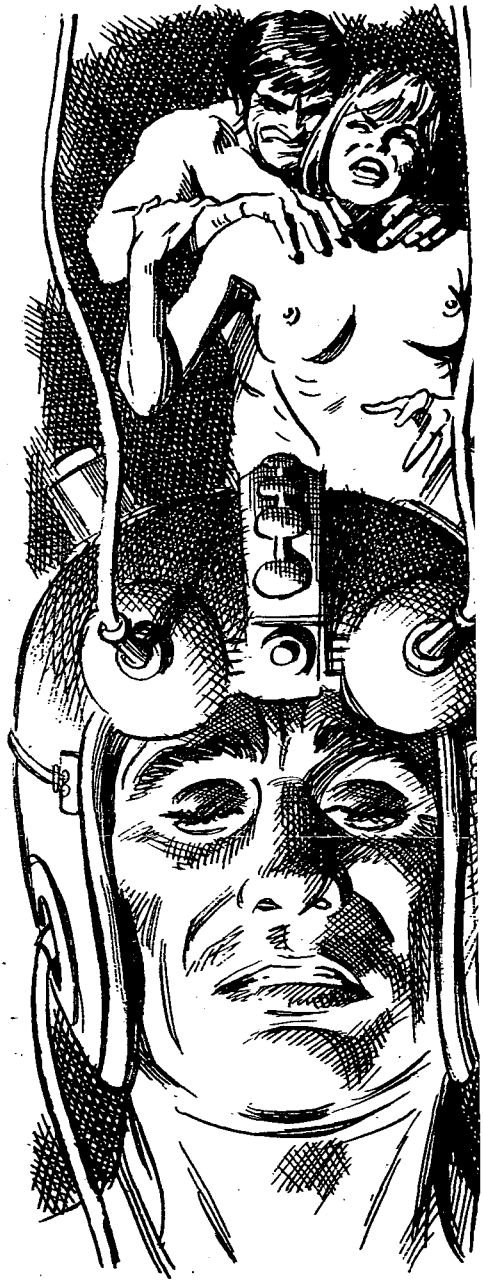
"Take him," the interviewer says, "take and treat him."

II

THE HELMET comes down on me; I feel the electrodes wink home and then I am taken far from the surgical table on which they have placed me and am somewhere else. Before me, in the long grey corridor, I see my father for the first time in fifteen years. I am told that he died painfully in an industrial accident but did not know him well enough at that time to care. "Here," my father says, handing me a gun secreted in his palm. "Here it is, son. Kill me."

"I don't want to kill you."

"Yes you do," my father says.



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He is very frail, looks just as he must have on the morning that the big crane took him. "That's what you told the interviewer wasn't it? That you wanted to kill people. That you wanted to hurt them bad. Here's your chance." I feel the steel against my fingers; he seems to wink. "Go on," he says. "Do it."

"I can't," I say, nevertheless raising the gun. "You died fifteen years ago. This is a dream."

"Of course it's a dream but it's a true dream son and only to help you. Come on," my father, dead fifteen years, says, "get it out of your system. Go on. Kill me." He giggles. "Bet you don't have the guts."

"Don't make me."

"You never did have the guts; none of you would-be murderers ever do. All you do is talk." He advances upon me. "All right you whelp," he says, "give me the gun."

"No," I say, backing from him, "no I won't." I look down at this grey against my palm, feel the power. "Don't make me."

"Yes you will," he says. His voice is wheedling yet smug. "Of course you will. You don't have the guts you see. I knew you never did. I know your type."

I feel the rage. It moves up several levels and comes out of me in slow, churning waves. "You bastard," I say, "you can't do this to me." I raise the gun, point it toward his neck. "Stop," I say but he does not stop. I pull the trigger, feel flame, the gun skitters in my hand. He falls, torn open.

I look at him.

III

WHEN THE HELMET comes off I feel cold and for a moment too weak to open my eyes; I do, however, and looking up see the interviewer as if from a great distance. "You killed," he says and I sense sadness. "You killed him."

"It was only the simulator," I say, "and I had no choice. He taunted me. He begged me to do it. He—"

"Do you still want to kill?"

I look up at the interrogator and he looks down at me and for a moment I say nothing, thinking of this. One cannot lie to the interviewers; this has been made very clear. Then again, the treatment is supposed to be unbearable. I had heard only vague rumors of it but suspect that it can get worse than this. "I don't know," I say. "Sometimes. But then again—"

"Death is permanent," the interviewer says. "Do you know that?"

"Yes."

"I do not think that you truly understand yet the permanence of death."

"I don't know. I said, I don't—"

"Enough," the interviewer says, cutting me off. He nods toward the technician who nods back and guides the helmet toward me again. "He is not ready yet. Give him more treatment."

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IV

THIS TIME I dream that I am in bed with a woman who has betrayed me. I am deeply in love with this woman—whose name I do not know and whom I cannot place except by emotion—and yet the sense of her betrayal comes off her skin; I sniff apprehension in her hair and find that I cannot bear to touch her. "You cheated," I say to her, turning in the bed. "You were with someone else."

"Yes," she says quietly after an instant, a woman incapable of lies. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to; it just happened. It will never happen again."

"I could kill you," I say, "I could kill you for this."

"Please," she says, turning to me, catching my shoulder to lean over and show me her eyes, full of pain. "Please don't talk that way. You know I didn't want—"

"You cannot do this to me. It isn't fair, it isn't right, you don't have the means—"

"All right," she says, shaking her head and moving away, lying back on the pillow, "if that's what it means to you, if you cannot understand. . .then kill me. I don't care."

I know that this is only a posture—she is a very pretty woman and full of the instinct for life—but the sight of her throat open before me on the pillow, the naked and vulnerable throat pulsing its life away near my lips inflames me and suddenly I find that I am grasping and choking her. "You bitch," I shriek, "you can't do this to me, you've got to understand, I'm a killer, a killer, I cannot control myself," and she cyanoses under me, her face turning blue, her body thrashing, death runs through her in small quivers and snatches, I squeeze her throat feeling death rise against me and she falls away in sections, screaming. Her eyes move open; death looks at me from those eyes.

I look at death.

V

"I'M SORRY," I say to the interviewer when the helmet comes off. "I tried not to. I didn't want to but she taunted me and finally—"

"Enough," the interviewer says shaking his head. "You killed. You killed again."

"I didn't want to," I say, "don't you understand? I don't want to be a murderer. It just turns out—"

"Your father," he says, "and then a woman you loved. You are very determined. Do you know how few there are who kill through the second stage?"

"Please," I say. Even pinned by constraints I force motion, try to show the interviewer the sincerity of my position. "I wouldn't have killed this time if she hadn't forced me. It was against my will. It was—"

"You're going to have to go to the third stage," the interviewer says. "Very few people need the third stage and fewer still fail that.

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But I must warn you that if you do we will have no choice."

"I don't want to kill," I say again, "it isn't my fault, nothing is my fault, all of them have done it to me, pushed me, baited me, compelled me. It's their doing! I'm a victim."

"The third stage," the interviewer says and the helmet comes down and I dream again and no way, no way to resist it. They are cruel but practical. Kind but vicious. Scientific but righteous. Sympathetic but damning.

VI

I LOOK AT MYSELF in the small enclosure of the dream. I have lived with myself for twenty-one years but have never known or seen this face as I do now. How ruined it seems! Small lines cut across it and lead toward darkness. Corrupt. I am irretrievably corrupt. "Please," the face says, "please don't kill me."

"I have to," I say, "it's for your own good."

"No," the face says. It is babbling. "Please no."

"But it must be," I say reasonably, "I must kill you for your sake. You're a murderer in a society which will no longer tolerate murderers. They have been detected at the source and trained out of their impulses. If they will not take training they are obliterated." I am very reasonable; as reasonable as the interviewer. I raise my hands to the face.

"Oh God," the face says, "please, no, I'm *you*, don't you know that, I'm *you*! how can you kill *yourself*?" babbling on in this manner but I am purified, I am seized by mission and no less purposeful than the interviewer himself and I advance upon the face. "You must die," I say, "because you're too dangerous and the treatments have proved how dangerous you are and you are incurable and it is irrevocable" and saying this I leap upon the face that is myself and digging my nails in, I—

VII

—WELL, I awaken and there is the interviewer and there are the technicians and all of them are looking at me and I do not know what their expressions mean. "Did I pass the third stage?" I ask, "did I pass it? I had to kill myself you know, I was just too dangerous, I accept the fact of my danger and accept the necessity for its elimination, doesn't that count for something? It ought to count for something you know, I mean isn't that the purpose of the third stage: to see if I have the will to will it out of myself," blabbering and babbling just like the face in the dream and as I look up at them I see finally what the third stage has meant and what it has tested and what they have done to me and this knowledge is absolutely too much for me; I cannot take it and back away, losing toehold and falling then; I fall and fall a long time but the faces are always there pursuing me down that well and for all I

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know I am falling yet and still waiting to learn if they will kill me or whether I have passed the third stage. Or both. Or neither.

—BARRY N. MALZBERG

City of Crocodile (Cont. from page 71)

honesty of which I spoke just now compels me to a further admission.

I panicked!

Kicking and thrashing and flailing my arms, my tears mingling with the purfumed water, I howled in the general direction of the heavens, "Ament! *Help*!"

Nothing happened.

"Ament! You said dead people don't hate! Save me, Ament! Forgive me. . .and save me!"

Then I saw it. A shape forming in the sky, growing, growing. It was a vast fantastic, terrifying. . .mouth! The crowd saw it too. First one group of spectators, then another, pointed upward and were struck dumb. As a frightful silence fell on the arena, the rest of Ament's face gradually materialized. Her eyes, like her mouth, wore an expression of bittersweet irony, compassion and. . .absolution.

But behind her another giant head was forming, and the mob gasped as its outlines became clear.

It was Sebek! And as we watched his jaws began to open.

"EVEN THE CROCODILES were afraid," marveled Giton for the hundredth time as he hunched up closer to me to keep warm. It was cold that night in Rome, and the doorway in which we huddled gave little shelter against the wind.

Ascyltus, on my other shoulder, grumbled, "It ruined the show. What kind of example is it to the military spirit of Rome when even crocodiles turn tail and flee?"

"The Romans fled, too," I reminded him. "We all fled, even I, after I managed to drag myself on board one of those galleys."

"She only saved you so she could torture you some more," said Ascyltus.

"I don't think so," I murmured, and then I heard—we all heard—a faint, faraway laugh and a soft voice that bade me hail and farewell.

"*Ave atque vale, Encolpius.*"

Or was it just the wind?

—R. FARADAY NELSON

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It was a comfortable existance–as long as reality could be made to conform to the–

IMAGES

JERRY MEREDITH

BREATHE.

What do you smell? Leaves? Grass? Coffee? Perfume? I smell perfume and hair, and if I open my eyes I'll see gold. Light gold tickling my cheek along with my twelve-hour stubble.

She shifts, my arm trailing over her back. I open my eyes. Sure enough, I see gold along with the regular morning light wiggling dustily through the window. I ignore the window.

Her eyes flutter.

"Hi," I say.

"Hi," she says, smiling a little and yawning.

"I think it's time to get up."

"Humph."

She turns over.

"I said, 'I think it's time to get up.' "

"You're ruining my dream. I'm lying on a hillside in the summer with grasses tickling me and—hey! Stop that!"

"Just call me grass."

I tickle her ribs unmercifully until she jumps out of bed, pulling the blanket with her.

"See, I was right," I announce. "I told you it was time to get up."

She stands in the middle of the room, red blanket hanging limply in her hand and trying awful hard to look angry, but failing miserably. She has that little girl pout on her face—the one that outwardly conveys hostility but inwardly transmits a smile. When she realizes how silly it is to stand there golden, angry, and naked, her lips quiver, vibrate as she tries to hold back the inevitable, and then the smile bursts out like—if you will excuse the overworked simile—like spring or flowers or a combination of the two.

"You're beautiful," I say. "And real."

"I should hope so." After a while she asks, "What kind of comment is that?"

"Oh, I don't know. Just something that hit me while I lay here staring at your beautiful body. You've got a very deep navel, you know."

"It goes all the way through."

"Well, I haven't noticed it going that deep, and I should know as much about your navel as any other person in the world. Probably as much as you."

"I doubt that."

The sheets rustle as I hop out of

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bed. I stick my finger in her navel tenderly, pull it out, and show it to her.

"Clean," I say.

She laughs and kisses me lightly. Her hair brushes my cheek.

"You're scratchy," she says.

"Not my fault. It's all those male hormones zipping around my body."

I start to kiss her again, but she dances away to the doorway. She drapes herself around the door's edge, sinuously like a cat. She has that same detached, distant feline look in her eyes.

"Not until you shave," she declares.

I shrug.

"I can wait. Passion ruleth not this body."

She disappears into the kitchen, cheeks bouncing and my eyes bouncing with them. Her image lingers for a long moment. Tall, fair-skinned, and legs—well, a trifle skinny. I am not being picky. She is perfect to the point of being real. Take the old movies (God, I miss the flicks!). The women on the screen seemed perfect. Beautiful. Smiling. Perfectly proportioned. . .but they were two dimensional and very unreal, existing for no one except those in a time long past. Who was it—Anselm?—who said that existence was perfection? Then she was perfection. To be any closer to a goddess would be to approach theater. She is real.

I sigh and pull on my shorts, because my upbringing has made me feel reluctant to trot around my room in my birthday suit. It's pretty funny once I think about how many times I'd had girls up here before I met *her*. Degenerate, my mother would scream. Vile, my father would say. Hellish, my preacher would shout. Shit, I would probably answer.

But I never walk around the apartment naked.

She calls from the kitchen, "What do you want for breakfast?"

"What do we have?"

"Eggs, coffee, sausage, grits, biscuits, apple jelly, country ham, and orange juice."

"Okay, now tell me what we're really having."

"Sugar Pops and coffee."

"Fine."

I stumble into the bathroom, piss, and stare at my face in the mirror. It is nothing worth immortalizing in clay. Kind of long and lean. Eyes a little too deep (*you look like a zombie, dear. . .*), chin a bit sharp. Mouth nearing the boundary of being too large, but it's good for smiling. Real.

I snap on the glaring light over the mirror and ignore the thousand little skin defects those lights illuminate. I suppose that if she hasn't been repulsed by my ugly face by now then she'll probably never give that as an excuse for leaving me—if she ever decides to leave. Having a great personality gives me confidence, as does my natural humility.

The refrigerator door slams.

"Anytime you're ready," she calls.

"In a moment."

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Black stubble sticks from my skin like the burned trunks of a forest. I lather up my face and commence to scrape it smooth with a razor blade about five shaves too old. The cold water doesn't help much. I bleed and curse a lot, but I guess the whole process proves that I am alive, or at least makes the possibility more concrete. Bleeding doesn't prove life; you can still ooze a lot of blood after you've died. Of course, you don't do too much thinking. "I think; therefore, I am." Conjure with that for a while.

One of my friends in school, years and his life ago, once told me, "Carl, reality is merely a figment of your imagination. Life is what you make of it. If you've got enough imagination you can live forever, do anything, love anyone."

I told him, "Sure, how about loving that girl."

I was a smart-ass back then.

But he was partially right. Sometimes you can create your own world, but other people's imaginations keep cluttering up your life until you've finally lost whatever it was that you were. All you do is respond, respond, respond.

So maybe life isn't what you make it, it's what you try to make it. When you stop trying, you stop living. Like brown autumn leaves herded along a sidewalk. Dead.

I wipe the blood and cream off my face and splash on some aftershave lotion.

"What's wrong?" she calls as I howl.

"Nothing," I answer. "I'm just imagining the pain."

"Pain?"

"Right now, there are a thousand ravenous ants lusting after my toes."

She laughs.

"Don't burn the cereal," I order, as I pat my face dry, little dabs of red spotting the towel. I don't think I'll bleed to death.

A pan clangs hollowly as it hits the kitchen floor. I hear it rolling, rolling, rolling rollingrollingrolling faster and faster until it dies. The kitchen is quiet.

"You all right?"

Silence.

"Hey! Anything wrong?"

Quiet. So quiet, like a cold day in a snowy field with no wind, shivers playing in waves along your back. Chilling silence.

I step into the bedroom.

She stands in the doorway eyes dark and wide and staring into mine and I know exactly what's wrong but I can't prevent her from screaming screaming her fists gouging the corners of her mouth screaming for three billion ghosts screaming to orange and purple sunsets screaming to me as I pluck two black capsules from the bowl at our bedside screaming backing away as I approach running for the apartment door but I grab her by the waist and try to force the pills down her screaming throat; I finally jab her chin; it pops, her eyes glaze; and I lay the pills under her tongue so they will dissolve while I stumble into the bathroom to retch and retch

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again. . .

After about a year I pull my head away from the commode and lean against the sink. I wash my mouth out with cold water, gargle, spit, and repeat the process. Then, I take a good look at myself in the mirror.

They're there. I can't sense them, but all those little bastards are there. The welts, the scars, the ulcers, the heavy tumor looming over my right eye. I wonder how big it is now. I haven't seen it for a few months. I had even convinced myself that it didn't even exist. But all dreams end, and muddy water eventually clears, leaving—well, something like a pitted bottom.

I want to keep the water muddy, so I swallow two capsules.

She stirs and groans in the kitchen. She is crying as I reach her. When I touch her shoulder, she stiffens, shudders, and turns away.

I stand and stare out the window. Outside, the sun gleams blindingly off the numerous glassy eyes of buildings. The view is of concrete and steel, stone and glass, mated into a stark, huge forest. So silent. Add a blue sky, absently brush it over an entire planet, letting it hang lightly over tree, mountain, ocean, and home like turquoise gossamer, and I suppose it makes a suitable shroud for a world.

I feel her hand on my elbow.

I sigh and say, "You've seen me as I am, haven't you?"

Nodding, she says, "Tell me it isn't true."

"I can't. It's real. We can't hide it anymore, can we?"

She gazes out the window, while I watch gnomes, trolls, talking mice, gods, heroes—those fantasies in which I at one time believed—fade away into darkness.

"It's hard to forget," she says numbly, and she walks into the bedroom.

I hear drawers opening; clothes being tossed around; water running hollowly to be sucked down the bathroom sink; the rustle of curtains as she steps softly to a window, probably looking down upon the empty network of avenues slicing the city into cemetery plots topped by massive, impersonal memorials; the squeaking of a door; and I turn to see her standing in the doorway, wearing an old sweatshirt and a faded pair of blue jeans. She carries a small duffle bag.

"You don't have to go," I say.

"I do. It's your place, your stuff." After a while she adds, "And if you could see me, you would feel the same way."

I nod. "Probably so."

Biting her lower lip, she trembles; then she is gone, the door hanging open behind her.

—And now with the sun melting in the West, oils dripping pink, violet, orange, and blood-red over a darkening canvas, hot and yet cold, I stand by this window. Four quadrants, each one different and each one constantly changing. As the glass darkens, my reflection shows itself to be as perfect as my reflection can be.

Real is what you make it, isn't it?

—JERRY MEREDITH

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THE STATE OF ULTIMATE PEACE

WILLIAM NABORS

Bill Nabors is a quiet Floridian to whom I was introduced by Joe Haldeman. "The State of Ultimate Peace" was entered in one of the final Guilford Conferences; where it caught my eye. It is Nabors' first sale–but almost certainly not his last.

Illustrated by JOE STATON

I.

succubus

AT THE VERY BEST moment of his conference with Lord Byron, E. E. Cummings and T. S. Eliot, an explosion of raucous laughter awoke Field Marshal Sea Boy D. Brown. Angry, confused and quite disappointed, he sat up in bed and screamed for his orderly, *goodpal*, the way he had learned from old movies and volumes of apocryphal war memoirs. Then, aware that the walls were soundproof; his orderly out for re-programming and his need indeterminate, the field marshal quieted down. What he really wanted, he decided, was to think. The possibility that he had war psychosis must be considered. After all, it flashed hundreds of times every day—PEACE, BROTHERHOOD, PUT AN END TO WAR—all that goddamn nonsense, and always the letters were bigger, brighter and overlay a more ominous scene. Once, he'd been moved to tears and just the past few days, he was almost certain he had heard his name stage whispered in the backgrounds. Was he losing his grip? Not likely—but? "It couldn't be," he mumbled. He was a patriot. He still ordered the bombardments. Shit—gracious glory, sometimes he even accelerated them! He couldn't have it; not war psychosis, peace madness, as the secret reports called it. It was unthinkable! He wasn't some snotty-nosed little conscript. He was a field marshal; such things did not happen to field marshals. A man of his rank, Chief of the General Staff, couldn't possibly contract such a disease; especially that particular strain. Why, there hadn't been any V. D. in the officer corp since the formation of Econoland, when the world's rich-

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est nations merged under the Governing Directors to hold back the fanatic millions of Third World's strike force. The old condom shop was as much a military tradition as the salute. If his fears proved correct, he could be the only officer to contract anything like this since—

Field Marshal Brown halted the terrible train of thought. This craving for poetry would stop. It was probably nothing more than the late blossoming of his mother's sensitivity. He couldn't actually have caught peace madness. He'd simply read the secret reports about the cases in London, Washington and Moscow, and like some ignorant hypochondriac, assumed that he'd caught it. "You, Brown, are a fool," he said and gazed at the tattered copy of *Guernica* he'd purchased on the negative culture market. Chances were, his behavior could be attributed to an inordinate fear of approaching old age! There'd been only the one incident with that crass young sculptress, Gloria Tenable. Other than that he hadn't touched a female in ten years. He was certain of his health! The only thing wrong with him was a little nostalgia for less complicated times.

"Stop worrying," he ordered himself, "and get rid of that goddamn Picasso and the books. Do you want to wind up in one of those convalescent centers for the senile and treacherous?"

But he could not stop worrying. Each day the field marshal seemed to spend more time pursuing poetry,

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music and other joys and much less time at his destructive duties. He devoted long brooding hours to contemplation of Dylan Thomas' poems, "The Hand That Signed A Paper Felled A City" and "Among Those Killed In The Dawn Raid Was A Man Aged One Hundred." The planning of attacks became almost unbearable. Military History, the chief passion of his life, bored and depressed him. For the first time, rank seemed a burden; glory, folly. It was as if a stranger had entered his body. He could not explain his behavior. Just yesterday, he'd ordered the Military Police to overlook the soldier's use of *Consolation* and *Fly*, volatile psychedelics, which severely curbed aggressive tendencies. Recent pictures from the front upset him so much that he sent hordes of prostitutes and entertainers to soothe the troops. When the Chairman Director consulted him about new war plans, the field marshal became evasive. He talked of fanciful new weapons systems. He promised his chairman bigger bombardments and world domination for Econoland's forces. In his heart, however, even as he raved on about Econoland's military might, there lurked the seeds of a mysterious and inhuman pacifism. He could no longer tolerate the thought of ordering operatives, even smart assed conscripts and cultural laggards, to their demise.

Abruptly, the field marshal threw back the covering and crawled out of bed. He opened a virgin bottle of mescal and poured it in the fetal chair's umbilical supplier. "Innocence," he mused, "should aid the search for truth." He eased into the chair's suspension seat, adjusted the temperature and cast aside his sleeping garments. He put on the breather helmet and fastened the umbilical cord to his abdominal connection. He waited for the plastic bubble to cover the chair; then secured his body and signaled for suspension. The room went black. His limbs eased into position as the chair elevated him. The apprehension he sometimes felt when using the device, passed as the warm fluid filled the bubble. He smiled; his breather helmet immersed and he eagerly awaited the first shot of mescal. "Nothing like liquor through the cord," he said and closed his eyes as the mescal burned his throat. It never ceased to amaze him, that whatever you put in the umbilical supplier profoundly affected the senses of taste and smell, even though it wasn't ingested through the mouth. There was no better way to dine, especially for lonely old bachelors. A great step forward, the fetal chair. Why, he hadn't had to see a physician or a psycho-priest in all the years since he was awarded his first unsophisticated model. It gave him an unrivaled sense of security. Too bad the directors didn't see fit to mass produce them for the goddamn conscripts and civilians. If the people could relax in their fetal chairs now and again, there might not be such an epidemic of social unrest.

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It was barely safe to go out. Look what had happened to him—trapped nearly three days in that cellar with Gloria Tenable—he'd never be able to explain it. It looked like the last bombardment had arrived. And they dared to call that a peace demonstration. That wicked little strumpet! He'd been caught off his guard. To resist all that time and then be abused in your sleep; it was unjust. He'd awakened to find her taking full advantage of his morning erection, humping like the devil and brandishing a big chisel to insure his continued cooperation. He hadn't even seen the reports then. A condom might have been useless anyhow, at least against that particular strain. Look what had happened to that Moscow propaganda expert. He was fortified with a permanent condom and still had picked it up from a member of the Bolshei Ballet Company. Now the best ad man in Econoland was sitting in a convalescent center in Siberia, dabbing paint and writing a book already titled, *Conversations With Michelangelo*.

When at last he pushed the birth button, a panic gripped Field Marshal Brown as he felt himself being ejected. The room seemed momentarily vacant; full of petty terrors he had never before noticed. The flashing commenced—STOP THE WAR—DON'T KILL HUNGRY PEOPLES. An enormous mosaic of a crowd of emaciated Asians stood in the background. Somehow, he knew they were to be neutralized—gassed. He heard the dead poet, Jed Kristian, speak softly, "Brown, Brown—*children of these anonymous slain shall bring to justice–*"

"Damn you; damn you," screamed the field marshal. "What do I have to do with this? It's nothing to do with me! I never did anything to these people—I."

Field Marshal Brown vomited his mescal. He sat naked on the cold floor and wept. Vaguely, he regretted his part in the slaughter. He had not wanted to be blamed for the carnage. He had not forseen such an event. His career was ruined. Thoughts of violence made his stomach wretch; he had it all right—peace madness. Of that he was certain.

II.

"I think that we are in rats' alley
Where the dead men lost their bones."

THERE WAS SOMETHING wrong about the way *goodpal*, his "magic nigger," put him back to bed and it disturbed the field marshal. It wasn't just that his dark little orderly had found him sitting there naked, half asleep; mumbling the lines from Sandburg's "Buttons." It was the indifferent way *goodpal* had handled him, tossing him on the bed like a bundle of soiled garments and then just leaving him there alone in the darkened room, without inquiring what the field marshal's preference might be. It seemed as if the natural distance between robot and man had suddenly expanded. Brown realized he could

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no longer consider *goodpal* a harmless and neutral machine. It must be deemed a threat; perhaps even a keeper. Certainly the "magic nigger" was now more an observer than an orderly. A metamorphosis had occurred. For the first time, the field marshal understood the true relationship of servant and master. An orderly knew everything about you; much more than a wife, mother, father, sibling, cat, psycho-priest, mistress—and in terms of objectivity—an orderly knew you much better than you could ever know yourself. It knew what troubled you, even if it did not know the origin of your difficulty and was not programed to term it peace madness. Brown realized, a robot like *goodpal* might prove extremely dangerous to someone who had fallen under official scrutiny and he was almost certain that he had made himself suspect. If he were brought before the Directors—a lower bureaucracy wouldn't dare proceed against a field marshal—this little electronic "darky" could do him boundless injury. His *goodpal* could make the difference between a life sentence to a convalescent center for peace maniacs and an indefinite term on the limbo-mechanism for the most serious offense in Econoland—peace mongering. *Goodpal* could make the field marshal's toilet habits the brunt of common jokes. The little robot could list its master's most innocent liaisons like taxes with numerous computers, boards, investigators and other petty bureaucrats. Every "magic nigger" in Econoland would receive data on him. *Goodpal* knew the stains; dirt, general frailties, whims, fears, lust, and unconscious habits of the honorable field marshal. The little robot was a nemesis such as he had not seen on the field of conflict. His *goodpal* was no longer his humble orderly, but his policeman; his jailer. Brown trembled. It seemed obvious. He was trapped! He could not do it violence. He could not smash it or follow the example of his ancestors and lynch it. Even the thought of assaulting it made him nauseous. He wrote a poetic note to compensate and put it where the robot would be sure to scan it—*on goodpal i rely, my robot friend; my true ally*—he went on for pages, each word a tribute, endearing him more to the machine that would, he feared, add so bountifully to his misery. He looked over the note—"By holy shit, reminds me of 'Gunga Dinn,' if I do say so myself."

No, the field marshal could not hate his *goodpal*! He could not even dislike it. When he got even a little angry at it, he became ill and had to lie down until his aggression passed. Regardless of how he approached the matter, he could not justify eliminating the robot. Neither could he convert it to pacifism. A *goodpal* made the worst kind of enemy—an enemy without volition. You could not reason with it; its performance was pre-ordained. There was nothing to do, Brown determined, but try to escape. After all, a

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poet of his stature was practically obligated to spread his joy among the masses. Besides, he wanted to see his Gloria, sweet little chiseler, and thank her for what she'd done.

THE FIELD MARSHAL was perched on the antique commode pondering his dilemma, when Sandburg appeared. The old poet carried a battered guitar, a walking staff and a rucksack. He was accompanied by seven goats, two dogs and a large mist-grey cat. He was clothed in heavy work garments, suited to the early decades of the twentieth century. His skin was dark and weatherbeaten from working and wandering the forgotten landscapes of his country. He appeared as gaunt as historic pictures of the man, Lincoln, about whom he'd written the scandalous and forbidden volumes of biography. His message for the field marshal was not subtle. It was plain like his clothes and his lost land. The poet spoke: "*In the old wars drum of hoofs and the beat of shod feet./ In the new wars hum of motors and the tread of rubber tires./In the wars to come silent wheels and the whir of rods not yet dreamed out in the heads of man.*"

The field marshal arose; pulled up his pants, nodded and offered his hand. "I've always admir—"

The old poet smiled and faded away with his goats and dogs. Only the cat remained. A silver trinket dangled from its collar. The field marshal knelt and removed it. It was shaped like soldier's tags he'd seen in museums. A small key was taped to one side of the tag and on the reverse side was stamped: "*Yes, tell your sins/ And know how careless a pearl fog is/ Of the laws you have broken.*"

Brown patted the cat. He thought he understood the lines from "Pearl Fog." He slipped the tape loose from the tag and held the key up to the light—"*goodpal*—md. 0X991." The field marshal smiled. He didn't quite know what to pack. His *goodpal* usually took care of that sort of thing.

SANDBURG'S VISIT had put Brown in a very good frame of mind. In honor of his new tranquillity, he named his cat "Happy"; called for the *goodpal*, slipped the key in the proper slot and erased the accumulated data. The machine stopped —dead silent. The cat purred. Brown picked it up and headed for the negative culture market. He would try *Emiliano's* first. Just from scuttlebutt, it seemed the sort of place where Gloria would eventually appear and a not at all bad place to satiate his sudden passion for the works of Thoreau. In addition, he knew he would be quite safe there, since no police were allowed in the market, a street prison, differing from the normal convalescent center in that the state did not sentence you there, or prevent you from haphazardly wandering in. Once you were interred, it was a different matter, a special dispensation was required in order to be released. Otherwise, the *goodpals* on duty at the gates would not let you

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out. The institution seemed to work well and it was self-supporting. Disgruntled conscripts; artists, general misfits, criminals and cultural laggards flocked willingly to the market, while normal operatives were aware that it was a prison and a place to be avoided. On the other hand, operatives who wished to purchase the forbidden commodities which supported the prison were channeled to a large warehouse on the market's edge, where drug dealers, pimps, book salesmen, and artists carried on the business of vice. The state attached no stigma to functioning operatives who made purchases at the warehouse. It expected them to do so, though it was a serious offense to do it openly. Operatives were permitted to visit brothels, buy drugs, books, paintings; satisfy any deviate taste so long as they attempted, no matter how feebly, to hide their vice. In reality, of course, no vice could be concealed; all *goodpals* were programed to detect crime. Still, it was a necessary act of patriotism to attempt to hide deviations. Sincere secretiveness was the true measure of respect for authority. Should an operative lapse into open vice, he was guilty of treason and thus fodder for the limbo-mechanism.

III.

incubus

FIELD MARSHAL BROWN entered *Emiliano's*. He looked in the small establishment and decided to sit by the window. When the waiter appeared, the field marshal ordered rum for himself and a saucer of milk for "Happy," who had already stretched out on the table for a nap. "Do you expect Miss Tenable today?"

"Gloria," the waiter said. "Oh sure, she comes in 'bout every day. Say ain't that there outfit—"

"It's a uniform," said Brown. "That will be all."

"O.K.," said the waiter. "I wasn't bein' nosey."

Brown peered out at the cobblestone street. Perhaps he would see Gloria as she neared *Emiliano's*. He hoped he would recognize her without too much difficulty. It had been so dark in that cellar and with her waving the chisel, he had been completely confused! He was certain he could pick her silhouette out of a large crowd, but about the color of her hair, eyes and complexion; the intricacies of her features, he could only guess. When they dug him out of the rubble, the *goodpals* in charge had rushed him away in an emergency vehicle to keep him safe from the raving horde of pacifists. He hadn't even been able to tell her goodbye; though truthfully, at the time he probably would have had her sentenced to the limbo-mechanism.

"Your order, sir," said the waiter "and the *Market Times*. You mentioned Gloria and I—well let the news speak for itself!"

A page of healines blared out at the field marshal: GIRLS INFECT THIRD DIVISION, SCULPTRESS TENABLE ELECTED NEW LEADER WOMEN'S FUCK FOR PEACE—FIELD MARSHAL

(Cont. on page 100)

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DAVID R. BUNCH

SHORT TIME AT THE PEARLY GATES

What can I say about a new David Bunch story? That its voice is uniquely Bunch? That for some Bunch is an acquired taste, but for others he is an exotic delight? That he was the only author represented by two stories in the original Dangerous Visions? *No matter–read it.*

THERE WAS A LOUD NOISE, I remember, and something green and red was splintered. Or maybe some things were dancing, like a STOP and a GO signal battling at one another. At any rate, after a thousand nightmares of noise and lights stopped shadow-walking across my head, he was there, misty and vague on a cloud-puzzle couch. I thought he looked like people, though like no one exactly. But might as well make friends. Especially since I was so definitely leaving home.

"Hello?"

He whirled off the couch, put on white soft slippers and took a chair near the couch. "Come on in," he hallooed, brushing some strange-reddish star-colored hair back from green eyes.

"Sorry to wake you," I said, stepping beneath a house-size rainbow that seemed to drip cold wet noises like ambulances in a fog, "but I've just left home."

"All right, all right," he breezed.

"Nice here," I said, looking around. "You live here, I guess?"

"No, just came up for a long week-end one time out of Street."

"Street! That's where I'm from—where I left the wife and kids! You ever try to cross Fast-Down Street?"

He did a funny little pucker-up, and the laugh-wrinkles shot out all around his gleaming uncanny eyes. "Have I! Man, those drivers heading downtown to those all-day parking lots! To be truthful, Fast-Down is where I left from for the long week-end. But I'm not sorry, I guess. I got a job up here right off. In Pete's Wash-Up." Then he hushed and turned sad, seeing he'd talked too much. "Yes, I tried to cross Fast-Down Street," he said softly. "Against the light."

"You figure there's much percentage in trying to cross?"

"Sure." And he gestured at all the soft fixtures on their cloud bases. "What you think got me this dream place? Right outside the Pearly Gates! Boy, when a bird comes by, I just give it the bird. I'm free, see. Long as I can wash up Pete's customers."

"I'd like to be free." I let up a sigh from the very bottom of myself. Business and family worries danced in my

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head like a hot-needle minuet until I longed to float away like a cloud or know some other comparable bliss. "Suppose I joined you for a short weekend here? Would I be in the way?" I asked.

"Certainly not. We've a vacancy." He whirled his right hand back of his head five turns and deftly set out a couch; it was shaped like a litter used for the wounded. But as I flopped on the couch, I smiled to let him know I could take his little joke. "This cot is loungier than six humming bird feathers on top of a couple of soap-bubble baths," I told him.

"Take off the pants."

"Sir!"

He reached his left hand back of his neck and with a bit of fancy magic supplementing some old-fashioned hocus-pocus he brought forth a solid-black garment. "You can't wear the bloody pants and shirt up here." I doffed pants and shirt and took the gownlike thing he handed me. "Hey! No! *No*!" The gown, being black, looked a lot like—brrr! a shroud. "I don't like this," I said. *"I don't like this!"*

"You want to stay, or don't you? Make up a decision quick, so I'll know what to do with the vacancy sign."

"*Hey*! I'll stay." I guess he'd got me with that threat about the vacancy sign. Although, as I heard later, he was bluffing and had unlimited vacancies.

"Well, well, well—now you're in uniform, what would you like most to do? We always allow for a bit of clowning around before we get down to the hard scrub."

"This may sound funny to you, but I'd like to eat pistachio nuts and bob for apples, like when I's just a tadpole at a fun-up party one time." Then I clapped my hand to my mouth, because that couch had just hit me a new way in the head. "Gads," I said, looking at the couch, "I hope you're not one of them. Trying to gaze in at my head through holes in my statements."

"Good heavens, no. Why should a normal guy like me want to go crouch-couching around like one of those mind mechanics looking for a screw-loose? I was no psychiatrist back there in Street. I was a street keeper, on the sewer wash-up. If it makes any difference. It doesn't, I guess." He handed me about twenty-six pistachio nuts. "I'll mark it down," he said.

"Mark it down? You mean I gotta pay for these nuts?"

"No, no, no. I'm just marking down queer people as they come up here knocking on the door. Running a little contest to pick the most absurd. Way I figure it now, using available records from my predecessors, and a little guesswork, you're somewhere in the neighborhood of four-hundred-eighty-five-thousand-seven-hundred-fifty-ninth in line. But don't lose heart about your rating. Some of these chaps may disqualify themselves yet. Any time a person and his life figure to some kind of good sense, he's disqualified from my contest. There's always a chance. But not much."

"But what if I disqualified my-

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elf?''

''That'd be fine—and unusual.''

Then I saw a big tub I hadn't noticed before. ''That tub! And is that lye soap? And a bristle brush?''

''On especially bad cases I throw some fine gravel into the suds. You have to get clean to pass through the Pearly Gates. Did you wish to be washed whiter-than-snow?''

''I'll take the full treatment,'' I said.

''Well, climb out of that uniform.'' I whisked off the black gown and stood there in just my seat-cushion hips and my desk stomach. My legs were spindly pins and my arms had jelly muscles. ''The usual build these centuries. We'll wash you up.''

Then he dumped me into the tub, and the bath water on the outside of me felt the way good port wine feels on the inside of me. But he started to hack up the lye soap, and he began to paddle in the tub with his lean, strangely-white hands, to swish up a lather. That irritates! Then he threw in the gravel. Then he stood off and looked at me. ''You look like a pretty dirty deal.'' He threw in the cracked glass. ''If that doesn't do it, we'll try straight pins and roofing nails.''

''*Hey*!'' I yelled. He picked up the bristle brush and started in. It was a wire bristle brush! ''This place just looked soft!'' I screamed, pointing at cloudlike furnishings.

''Too late now. They get it according to how they've lived.'' He whirled around me, scrubbing as he went and yelling all the time—things like ''remember that time?'' and ''how about that deal?'' and ''wasn't that cheating?'' and ''didn't the kids need milk worse'n that horse needed your moral support?'' I believe he mentioned every shady thing I'd ever done or ever wished I could do. I felt like a dirty dog, and that brush was scrubbing off fur.

''*Hold on*!'' I yelled. ''I'll take the short wash.''

''Well,'' he yipped, ''that suits us.'' So he kicked a switch and the water started to boil. Seemed like he must have thrown in broken knives and pieces of lawn-mower blades for the abrasive as he doubled speed with the brush. ''Doesn't mean less. Just means faster. We have to turn out sparkling-clean jobs before they can go through the Gates.''

It was the hardest bath I'd ever had, but when it was over I felt like I didn't have a speck of dirt on me nor a bad thing in me. I felt clean as a fresh-rolled snowman. He flopped me on to some cloud furniture, and I gasped, ''Thanks. When will I be able to come back, if I go through the Pearly Gates?''

''You won't,'' he said. ''You'll be dea—''

But just then, as I was about to pass blissfully through the Gates, a million hard lights seemed to go on in my head, and I woke up to ten thousand wailing aches and a whole complete set of big knife-sharp pains. The wife was there, shadowy and dim, but certainly *her*! holding our two hungry kids, one by either

(Cont. on page 100)

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If God does not exist, it may be necessary to invent Him . . . so that He may be destroyed!

F. M. BUSBY

I'M GOING TO GET YOU

You. You, out there. Do you exist? I don't think you do; I've never believed in you. They always told me you created everything, that you are my loving Father. You don't act like it. No, I haven't believed in you.

But if you don't exist, then I have nothing left to hate.

My life, whether by accident or your malevolence, has always been a nightmare. I don't know—I can't know—whether you exist. Do I scream my hate to an empty sky? *Please* exist. It would be intolerable to have no possible target for my revenge, no matter how far above my powers.

You. You see me as a clown, a puppet, for how can I reach you when I can't find you or even know that you are real? What can I do? Don't worry; I'll think of something. I will. Nothing else, now, is important to me.

Early, you took my father. People said "Praise God!" and did not protest, but I wondered why he was dead and why anyone should praise you. I shrugged the brace away from the sores on my paralyzed leg—for you had started early on me, hadn't you?—and tried to find meaning in life again.

For a time I truly thought it would work, until you took my mother and my brothers. You didn't fool me that time; I knew the supposed accident was a purposeful act. There was no other reason why one drunken sot and his car should wipe out most of a family and escape unharmed. I suspect you meant to get me too, then, and slipped up. If that's how it was, you may have made the most crucial error of your long career of tyranny. I hope so.

Because now I *know*. And at the same time I don't know. If you are there, there at all, then somehow I will find you, and destroy you. If you are not there—but you have to be! I'll force you to exist; you can't escape me that way.

You really set me up after the funeral, you cosmic bastard! First the three young thugs who beat me up; crippled, I could offer little resistance. Then in the hospital, in nurse's garb, was the lady Cristal who became my wife.

You left us alone for nearly two years. You enjoyed that, didn't you—the cat-and-mouse thing? Allowing Cristal to become pregnant,

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then not quite killing her when you took our baby. You're really quite expert, aren't you? For a time I allowed myself *again* to believe that we would be let to live our lives, childless but in relative content and great love.

You know where you made your mistake? You're arrogant. You didn't bother to give me any reason for Cristal's death yesterday. I intend you to regret that.

She came in the door, out of the cold, with a bag of groceries. She simply collapsed, smiling at first and then showing shock and grief when she knew you were killing her. The food, for a minor personal celebration of ours, was scattered across the floor. I won't tell you how I felt; why should I let you gloat more than you're gloating already?

But then I *knew* the hell of my life was no accident. Then I knew that if you exist, at least I have a target.

I know you're not going to be easy to attack. You hold all the high ground. I don't know what you are or where you are or how to reach you.

But if you could simply wipe me out at whim, you'd have done so by now, I think. I'm counting on that. There must be rules that govern you; I have to believe that. And by those rules, your own rules, I think you've given me a chance that you didn't intend. I must be right; otherwise you'd have killed me.

I'm not alone; I've asked advice from friends I can trust. They don't believe me but they humor me and are helpful.

My friend Charles the engineer says that if you are the Creator you must also be the Totality—that I am as my own fingernail trying to change my own mind. He may be right. But a hangnail can produce blood-poisoning; perhaps I shall be your friendly neighborhood hangnail, before we're done.

Larry, my lawyer friend and an atheist, clearly thinks I've lost my marbles. He says that if you exist you are the spoiled-brat God of the Old Testament, an omnipotent 5-year-old child who never changed your mind in anyone else's favor and never will. So that I may as well forget it. But I think I am smarter than five years old. We'll find out.

I thought of attacking you through devil-worship but my friend Gerard says that if I am right you *are* the devil, and the last thing I'd do is worship you. In his view, and perhaps he is right, you'd be some sort of parasite claiming Godhood but not entitled to it. I may as well believe part of this along with parts of other views. It sounds like my best chance, and I need all the breaks I can get, dealing with something like you.

I may be weak and even stupid by your lights, but I don't intend to remain helpless. You'll see. There is a whole universe which I think you did not create: you came along later and took advantage of it. That makes me as good as you are, maybe better; you hear? We are

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here in this universe together, and if you can influence my existence, perhaps I can influence yours, too.

Gravitation works both ways.

You have negated everyone I ever loved, everyone who ever loved me. You haven't negated me yet; why not? Maybe you can't. Again, why not? Because it would backfire? Because we're tied together somehow? That's the only handle I have; I think I'll try it.

I've asked you, begged you, to return Cristal to me. You wouldn't answer. I tried prayer, the format you're supposed to appreciate. No comment. I tried other ways. And you ignored me.

It shouldn't be difficult. You resurrected a man once, if the stories are true. You rolled back a sea. You did a lot of things. Or so I've been told.

Maybe you didn't. Maybe you can't do anything but hurt and kill. It's hard, even now, to accept such a concept of you. But I must.

So I am going to call it quits, for this life. No more. Does that scare you? It should. Because I think that when I cease to exist, so will you.

I'll settle for that.

In a few minutes now, we'll see.

—F.M.BUSBY

Pearly Gates (Cont. from page 97)

hand, and a tall thin doctor was looking down at me where I lay on a narrow white bed. "He's just shaken up a little," the sawbones assured the wife, as he pushed some soggy, strange-reddish hair toward his head's high dome, "from being knocked down by that big old beer truck hit-and-go. No broken bones. We'll have him back out there earning my bill, and a check for you. *Ha!* By tomorrow!"

—DAVID R. BUNCH

The State of Ultimate Peace (Cont. from page 94)

DESERTS, GOODPAL DISARMED—FRONT LINE TROOPS THROW DOWN WEAPONS—BROWN TO BE LIMBOED WHEN CAPTURED—ZACHARIAH THE PIMP RECEIVES ANOTHER FUCKER MEDAL OF HONOR—DIRECTORS REMAIN UNINFECTED, RESIST PEACE PLEAS, THREATEN TO MOBILIZE GOODPALS—THIRD WORLD OFFENSIVE EXPECTED SOON—PEACE VIRUS BAFFLES RESEARCHERS, NO KNOWN ANTIDOTE!

The field marshal was overcome—excited. He could not even read his Thoreau. He waited for Gloria. He wanted to get into this fight. A military man couldn't sit out a war, not so long as there was a place for him. He had just assumed when he came down with peace madness, that his career was over, but now he could get right back into the fight and fuck his heart out for peace! Why there was no end to the glory he might bring to humanity. He wasn't much of a poet—he realized that—but as a war hero, perhaps the new state would allow him a pension. He could start a little magazine—call it *Brown's Journal of Verse*. Why there was no limit to where he could go! He got an erection, just thinking about it. He might have to change uniforms but he was still in an army.

—WILLIAM NABORS

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SCIENCE FICTION:
A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

BRIAN M. STABLEFORD

Introduction

VIRTUALLY ALL science fiction criticism has employed a purely literary perspective. In the U. S. A. Alexei and Cory Panshin have produced in this magazine a highly intelligent literary analysis of the SF paradigm—going so far as to make a tripartite division of that paradigm—and have also produced a model for an entirely new paradigm calculated to rescue SF from puerility. In Great Britain, Peter Nicholls has compiled a "Great Tradition" from which SF might be said to draw its literary inspiration.

I do not wish to quarrel with the literary validity (if there is such a thing as validity in literary criticism) of either of these ideas. I do, however, wish to contrast them to a wholly different perspective for consideration of SF—the sociological perspective. I believe that a great deal of the association of ideas which has been attempted under the aegis of investigating the literary heritage of SF and SF's vocabulary of symbols is quite spurious. We have become bogged down in matters of definition, haunted by the relationships between SF and other imaginative literatures; and between SF and mundane literatures. Content analysis and the taxonomy of ideas and modes of presentation of ideas are by no means sterile pursuits, but the nature of the explanations which they provide is strictly limited. I believe that it is useful not only to study SF as a literary phenomenon, but also to investigate it as a social phenomenon.

THE SOCIAL PHENOMENON which we know as science fiction is a product of the 20th century. The vocabulary of symbols used in SF is largely inherited from earlier writers—particularly from the work of Wells and Verne—and much literary debate has followed the primrose path of symbol-tracing back through these authors to much earlier works.

The social subculture now known as science fiction was first incarnated as "scientifiction" by Hugo Gernsback, and the first organ dedicated exclusively to its dissemination was, of course, Gernsback's AMAZING STORIES. The subculture developed almost exclusively in the medium of the pulps until the 50's when the pulp medium dissolved and its functions were taken over by

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the paperbacks, and to some extent by digest magazines and hardback publishers. The subculture survives today in all these vehicles. In all sectors of its market, SF is a clearly labelled commodity.

The identity of science fiction is inherent in the fact that it provides a certain orientation for the reader to the ideas which it presents. This orientation is not unique to science fiction, nor does all work using the vocabulary of symbols characteristic of SF provide this orientation.

I hope to make this statement clear by explaining why I do not consider the work of Verne and Wells to be part of the same social phenomenon as science fiction, and by offering a hypothesis as to the social function of science fiction.

Jules Verne worked within a paradigm which may be described as "innovative." He drew his inspiration from the scientific and technological development of his time, and the scope of his invention lay entirely within the science and technology of his time. He was interested in the cultural *impact* of science and technology. His themes are concerned with the newness of things which science and technology were bringing into the world. To some extent, he wrote about the future, but he was interested in the future only insofar as it was becoming the present, and then only in a limited sense.

In *Future Shock*, Alvin Toffler describes the effects which the accelerating velocity of change is having on the world and on our lives. These effects he classifies as novelty, transience and diversity. Verne's work is all about novelty. He has little concept of transience and none at all of diversity. He introduces his ideas one at a time, into the present. His stories are futuristic only in that the inventions which he used were still on the drawing board (and in some cases never got off the drawing board).

There can be no doubt that what Verne was appealing to in his readers was the "sense of wonder" of which the SF establishment is so proud. Save for his infatuation with innovation, his writing is aesthetically vacuous, and to this extent too it bears a strong resemblance to early SF. But there can also be no doubt that Verne evoked his sense of wonder wholly within the context of the present. The orientation which he offered his readers was to contemporary science and technology.

There is an oft-quoted statement of Verne's (originating in an interview in *T. P.'s Weekly* in 1903) wherein he compares his work to that of H. G. Wells:

"We do not proceed in the same manner. It occurs to me that his stories do not repose on a very scientific vasis . . . . .I make use of physics. He invents. I go to the moon in a cannonball discharged from a cannon. Here there is no invention. He goes to Mars in an airship, which he constructs of a metal which does away with the law of gravitation. *Ça, c'est tres joli,* but show me this metal."

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This statement underlines Verne's total commitment to the present. He *denies* the presence of invention in his work, and criticizes Wells for not keeping an anchorage within the established and the known.

Historians of SF often make use of this quote to support the scientific paradigm of SF. They usually go on to claim that Verne was narrow-minded and that Wells was really as scientific in his outlook as Verne. Much capital has been made of the fact that Verne's example was very ill-chosen, in that his cannonball was scientifically incompetent, while Wells' "anti-gravity" is now accepted jargon and its scientific incompetence is not so readily demonstrable. But this merely serves to obscure the real point of the exchange. Verne is renouncing imagination, and crediting Wells with too much.

Wells would hardly have argued with the accusation that he was not writing within a scientific paradigm. Unlike Verne, Wells lived to encounter science fiction, and he was adamant in the assertion that he had nothing to do with it (in the introduction to a collection of his "fantastic romances").

Wells was a great deal more interested in the future than Verne, but his interest was by no means the same as that of the SF writers. His major visions of the future (*Men Like Gods, The Sleeper Awakes, The Shape of Things To Come* etc.) were not so much fiction as Utopian philosophy. There is a vast difference between these works and the romances (*First Men in the Moon, Island of Doctor Moreau, War of the Worlds, The Invisible Man,* etc.) and to lump all of Wells' imaginative fiction together is to make a gross conceptual error. Utopianism is certainly an orientation to the future, but it has nothing at all to do with the paradigm which has identified the SF field since Gernsback. The literary legacy which Wells' "popularized" Utopias owe to his earlier romances is quite evident, but the usage and the purpose of this legacy is totally different from the usage and purpose of his vocabulary of ideas in the romances. The Utopian orientation is essentially a moral and didactic one.

Once we have removed Wells' Utopian concerns from the body of his imaginative writings, we have very little left that has anything to do with the future. The ideative qualities of *The Invisible Man* and *The Island of Doctor Moreau* are hardly extrapolative. Though they are not Vernian in the intimacy of their mechanics with the science of the day, they are most certainly Vernian in the orientation which they provide. Their business is the miracle industry. Their appeal to the sense of wonder is almost exclusively through novelty. The small—but very important—minority of Wells' fiction which is actively concerned with other times than the present (*The Time Machine* and *A Story of the Days To Come* especially) involve the future only as a medium for flights of

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fancy. They were not written within the SF paradigm.

Perhaps, before going further, I should classify exactly what I mean by "the SF paradigm". Alexei and Cory Panshin, in their column, *SF in Dimension*, identified three paradigms which have at one time or another had currency within the SF field: the "scientific" paradigm of Gernsback, the "predictive" paradigm of John W. Campbell and the "realistic" paradigm of Robert A. Heinlein. I think that all these paradigms are facets of the same direction of concern and I shall regard them as subclasses of *the* SF paradigm, which might be characterized as the "extrapolative" paradigm. The distinction between these subclasses is a literary pedantry, but it is a pedantry which has generated a great volume of argument in terms of defining the content of SF. The Panshins indict all three paradigms on the grounds of literary accuracy. They claim —quite correctly—that what Heinlein has written is not true to the Heinlein paradigm, that what Campbell published in *Astounding* and *Analog* never adhered strictly to the Campbell paradigm, and that virtually no SF at all falls strictly within the bounds of the Gernsback paradigm. They are driven inexorably to the conclusion that in order to rationalise SF as a literary entity we need an entirely new paradigm—one which even does away with the name "science fiction" and describes instead "speculative fantasy". Briefly, the Panshin thesis is this: From a literary point of view, science fiction has never been what it has claimed to be. Therefore, science fiction does not exist, and we should be talking about, thinking about and writing about something called speculative fantasy, which is what the stuff we have been calling science fiction really is.

In terms of literary taxonomy, this is all very well, but it misses completely the sociologically very interesting fact that *although* SF has never been true to its own paradigm, that paradigm has survived for nearly 50 years, and it is still advanced as the paradigm which characterises SF and in which *the merit of SF as a literature lies*.

The Panshins' "new" paradigm for a didactic/aesthetic fiction (1) is very little different from the philosophy which Harry Bates adopted when he founded Astounding Stories in late 1929. It is almost identical to the argument advanced by Groff Conklin in the introduction to his first SF anthology, *The Best of SF*, in 1946. Both of these men knew the falseness of most of the material that was published under the aegis of the SF paradigm, but they did not demand that the old paradigm be thrown away and a new one instituted.

Why not?

Basically, because they were both aware of an important fact which the Panshins are prepared to ignore. Science fiction is not and cannot be defined in terms of its literary content, but this does not mean that

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there is no such thing as science fiction. It means that the essential quality of SF is to be found in the *attitude* which people adopt towards it—readers and writers and critics alike. The paradigm which Panshin rejects in all its incarnations is the very substance of SF from the sociological point of view.

The identify of SF—the identity of the *social phenomenon* called SF—is not to be found in its content; it is to be found in the way people *use* it, the way people orient themselves towards it, and in the way which it orients *them* to matters external to it.

I have given up asking myself the question: What is SF? I now consider instead the questions: What is SF *for*? What do people *do* with it? (2)

The literary *trueness* of SF to its paradigm is thus no longer relevant. The point at issue now becomes the *usefulness* of SF within its paradigm. Scientific accuracy, predictive validity and "realism" all become means to an end, that end being to support the function which SF is fulfilling with respect to its readers and society as a whole.

If we return now—briefly—to Wells and Verne, the difference in orientation between their work and the work of the SF writers which I attempted to highlight can now be seen in context. Wells and Verne were not working within the SF paradigm. Verne's paradigm was far narrower, and Wells' was far broader. Verne was scientific; Wells was ideative. Neither was both. The SF paradigm insists that SF is ideative only within a scientific context, but that it should explore the full limits of that context.

When *The Time Machine*—the Wells story which seems to live most meaningfully within the SF paradigm—was written, the paradigm did not exist. It did not then belong to the same subculture which SF belongs to, or even to the same type of subculture. *Now*—and ever since 1926—we have had the option open to us to *use The Time Machine* exactly as we would use any other time travel story. It is now possible for us to use *The Time Machine* as SF, and to meaningfully speak of it as SF. We may also *use* as SF the works of Verne, of Cyrano de Bergerac, of Voltaire and of Lucian of Samosata, but when doing so we must remember that this option has become open to us only recently, and it is a conceptual mistake to think that because I, in 1973, can read *The Time Machine* as science fiction, H. G. Wells, in 1895, *wrote The Time Machine* as science fiction. (3)

To this extent, therefore, the Panshin argument, and more particularly the "Great Tradition" of Peter Nicholls (running through Gilgamesh, Beowulf, *Paradise Lost, Frankenstein,* and *The Heart of Darkness,* with others *en route*) are literary smokescreens. Constructions of the Nicholls type (e.g. Bailey's *Pilgrims Through Time and Space* and Philmus' *Into the Unknown*) are producing a history which is quite artificial.

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SF critics over the years have objected strenuously to comments of the type "That isn't SF—it's good." The SF Foundation has declared one of its purposes to be the promotion of SF in the public eye (and the academic eye) from its trash image to the image of a rewarding and serious literature. And yet it remains a truism that, with very few exceptions, books labelled as SF tend to sell the same number of copies, regardless of literary merit or seriousness of intent. I can vouch for this to some extent, because my SF has neither the least vestige of literary talent nor any serious intent, and yet I make a living as an SF writer.

Is it not possible that the bulk of SF is trash because it is *useful* at a trash level? Is it not possible that an absolute stinker like *The Halcyon Drift* (DAW Books no. 32) gains a wholly undeserved but nevertheless real *usefulness* from its nominal aspiration to the SF paradigm and its labelling as SF?

Perhaps we should not be so concerned about SF's failure to metamorphose from a literary toad into a prince of fictions. Perhaps we should ask instead why people *need* a fiction which is realistic in the extrapolative fashion which SF claims to be. Perhaps we should ask why that need is so shaped that it can be satisfied by a fiction which only *pretends* to fulfil its own paradigm.

The science in SF is *lousy* science, but it is *not*—as John Campbell emphatically pointed out—*pseudo*science. It has to pretend to be real or it fails—not the paradigm, for it almost always fails that—but the *need* which it is supposed to be filling.

The success of *Astounding* in the 40s is often attributed to the fact that it was more literate than its contemporaries. Quite apart from the fact that this is not strictly true, it completely fails to explain the continued success of *Astounding/Analog* relative to its undeniably more literate competitors in the 50s (especially *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction)* and the 60s (*F&SF* + *Galaxy* and Cele Goldsmith's AMAZING & FANTASTIC). Campbell's success has always seemed to me to be linked to the vehemence with which he championed the SF paradigm rather than to the literary quality of his material. (Which is not to imply that Campbell's editorship was deficient in literary terms, simply that the literary quality was not nearly so important with respect to the SF which he presented and played such a large part in developing. *Unknown* was considerably more literate than the contemporary *Astounding*, just as the British *Science Fantasy* always presented a higher standard of material than *New Worlds* in the 60s.)

I believe that the search for a high literary standard in contemporary SF is to a large extent a wild goose chase. If badly-written SF can do for the reader what well-written SF can do, and do it as well, then the SF establishment will never succeed in shaking off its trash label.

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Where trash will fulfil the reader's need, literary effort is and will remain an expensive and unprofitable luxury. The SF establishment can justifiably admire its Delanys and its Silverbergs and its Ballards, but it is quite useless for it to aspire as a whole to the level of seriousness and literacy that these men represent. The social context in which science fiction exists is simply not conducive to such a literary evolution of the whole field.

In the preceding argument I have made a great deal of the idea of the use of SF, but I have stated the concept simply in order to illustrate the sociological viewpoint as it might be applied to SF. I am obviously in no position to make an authoritative statement as to what the majority of SF readers use SF for, but I think I might be able to offer a reasonable hypothesis.

Consider the following statement from Goldmann's *The Hidden God*:

"The historian of literature and philosophy should study not only world visions in the abstract but also the concrete expressions which these visions assume in the everyday world. In studying a work he should not limit himself to what can be explained by presupposing the existence of such and such a vision. He must ask what social and individual reasons there are to explain why this vision should have been expressed in this particular way at this particular time."(4)

The reason why I have been so adamant that SF is a literature of the 20th century now becomes apparent. We now have a new question for consideration: What is there in the social reality of the 20th century which would provoke the development of a literature along the lines implicit in the SF paradigm?

Or: If SF really does provide a new kind of orientation for the consumer, which the consumer may then exploit in the orientation of his person and his experience to external reality, why should this orientation be particularly pertinent to the 20th century?

One answer is provided by Alvin Toffler in the book I mentioned earlier—*Future Shock*. He states that the acceleration of change makes it absolutely imperative that we should reorient ourselves in a temporal framework. He sees science fiction as one of the major curative mechanisms which society has evolved to cope with "future shock," and he advocates the teaching of science fiction in elementary schools as part of an educative programme dedicated to bringing about that reorientation.

I do not want to say that this is the only, or the best explanation of SF as a social phenomenon. Nor, if it *were* so would I want to imply that SF is the only, or the best method which society has evolved for coping with the problem of the ever-more-rapidly-approching future.

As an alternative, I can offer the following account, which is from Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man:*

"In reducing and even canceling the romantic space of imagination,

(Cont. on page 110)

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loving enough. Oh, Joe, do you find me so?''

''Oh, Mary, I had to journey two centuries to find such a lover! There never was a love like ours before! Dearest Mary!''

''My dearest Joe!''

And so on. Why do I tear my heart by recalling our words then?

In our restlessness, we walked about the house, talking, touching each other.

''You must not reproach yourself at any time. You know I must go. . . Just remember me as a spirit who brought you good news you richly deserved, no more!''

''Oh, much more, very much move! But two centuries. . .I am dust to you, Joe, no more than mouldering bones. . .''

''Never have you been less than a living spirit.''

We took little William with us into the garden. Mary brought out a rough-and-ready picnic on a cloth and we sat under old apple trees on which the apples were already beginning to glow with ripeness. Great moon-daisies were shedding their yellow petals all round us; a mint grew in the grass which made the air extra sweet. But I had to return to the subject of Frankenstein.

''Something has happened to us, Mary, that enables us to step between worlds. It may not last. That's why I must go. For while I have it in my power, I must put an end to Frankenstein's monster. You have told me that your book is not finished. But to track the creature down, I must have advance information. Tell me what happens after the trial of Justine.''

She bit her lip. ''Why, it is the history of the world. The creature naturally wants a soul-mate. Frankenstein repents some of his harshness and agrees to make one, a female.''

''No, I don't remember that in the book. Are you sure?''

''So I have written. That is as far as I have got.''

''Is this female made? Where? In Geneva?''

She frowned in concentration.

''Frankenstein has to go away to make it.''

''Where does he go?''

''He has to make a journey, as we must. . .''

''What do you mean by that? There is a close link between him and you, isn't there?''

''He's just my character. Of course there's an affinity. . . But I don't know where he goes, only what his intentions are. And of course his creature follows him.''

We sat in silence, watching William play and listening to the sound of insects.

''You've told me nothing about your future. What books are written? Do people still believe in God? Did socialism come in? Is my father's name still honoured? What do women wear? Has Greece been liberated? What things do people eat?''

''Human nature is the same. If that changes at all, the change is gradual. We have had wars greater than the wars against Napoleon,

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fought with more terrible weapons and less mercy, and involving most of the nations of the globe. People are still malicious because they are miserable. Women are still fair and men still love them, but there are fashions in love, as in other things. We hope the human race will continue to exist for millions of years, and grow to more understanding but, in the year 2020, the world seems to be falling apart at the seams."

And I told her about the time-slips, and how I had found myself back in her time.

"Take me to see your car. Then perhaps I may believe I am not dreaming!"

She carried William, and I led her, holding her small hand, back to where the automobile was parked. Unlocking it, I made her climb in, showed her the swivel-gun, the maps, and many other things to hand.

She made no apparent effort to take it in. Instead, she stroked the back of the driving seat.

"This is beautiful material. Is it from some hitherto undiscovered animal, surviving perhaps in the Southern Continent?"

"No, it is plastic, manmade —one of the many tempting gifts of Frankenstein's heirs!"

She laughed. "You know, Joe, you are my first reader! A pity you don't remember my book a little better! A pity I do not have a copy bound to present you with! How grandly I would inscribe it. . . Are you going now?"

I nodded, suddenly almost too full of emotion to speak.

"Mary, come with me! You are a displaced person, I swear! —Come and be a displaced person with me!"

She held my hand. "You know I can't leave dear Shelley. He means to mend the world, but he needs me to mend his clothes. . . Do you like me, Joe?"

"You know it goes beyond that! I worship and respect your character. And your body. And your works. Everything that is Mary Shelley. You are woman and legend—all things!"

"Except the fictitious character by which I am best known!"

"It stands greatly to your credit that you warned the world about him."

We kissed and she climbed out on to the track, clutching Willmouse to her neat breast. She was smiling, although there were tears in her grey eyes.

"You must say my farewells to Lord Byron and Shelley. I am ashamed that I have abused their hospitality."

"Don't spoil things by being conventional, Joe! We have been phantoms out of Time."

"Oh, dearest Mary. . ."

We smiled mutely and hopelessly at each other, and I started the auto rolling, back in the direction of Geneva.

For a long while, I could see her in the rear-view mirror, standing in the dusty road in her long white dress, holding her child and looking

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after the Felder. Only when she was out of sight and I had turned a corner did I remember that I had left the little willow leaf from her body lying upstairs on her Sophocles.

She would see it when she climbed up to bed that night.

—to be concluded—

—BRIAN ALDISS

Sociological Perspective (Cont. from page 107)

society has forced the imagination to prove itself on new grounds, on which the images are translated into historical capabilities and projects. The translation will be as bad and distorted as the society which undertakes it." (5)

Again, I might quote (out of context) from R. D. Laing's *Politics of Experience*, where he refers to the "transcendental voyages" undertaken by schizophrenics:

"Can we not see that this voyage is not what we need to be cured of, but that it is itself a natural way of healing our own appalling state of alienation called normality." (6)

Without necessarily embracing the larger ideas of Marcuse or Laing, it is possible to see in these statements a possible social pathology for the existence and symptoms of science fiction. All of these ideas require investigation in greater depth, but I hope that even at this superficial level of consideration they can lend weight to my claim that there is much to be gained from the sociological viewpoint in the search to find meaning in science fiction.

NOTES.

(1) Perhaps I should make clear that I do not use "didactic" in the same sense that the Panshins seem to. They use it to mean "pertaining to ideas," while I associate the word with an instructive or educative function. I think that the Panshins' use of the word *didactic* here is close to my use of the word *ideative* elsewhere in the article.

(2) When I asked Tony Sudbery this question he replied (facetiously) "People use literature to fill a literature-shaped hole inside them." Although it evades the question, I think this answer provides a useful perspective. What I am really concerned with in this article is the topology of a hypothetical "science-fiction-shaped hole".

(3) I should like to refer anyone who does not think that this statement makes sense to a brilliant document called "Pierre Menard, Author of the 'Quixote' " by Jorge Luis Borges. It is in his collection *Labyrinths*.

(4) L. Goldmann, *The Hidden God*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964. p. 19.

(5) H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964. p. 250.

(6) R. D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience*, London, Penguin Books, 1967. p. 136.

—BRIAN M. STABLEFORD

ON SALE IN APRIL AMAZING (Feb. 19th)

JOHN BRUNNER'S new novel-**TOTAL ECLIPSE, FOUND IN SPACE** by **R. MONROE WEEMS, WHAT WAS THAT?** by **F. M. BUSBY, AFTER YOU'VE STOOD ON THE LOG AT THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE,** by**GRANT CARRINGTON** and many new stories and features.

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Reviews by Fritz Leiber

Ingmar Bergman: Fantasy Novelist

Four Screenplays of Ingmar Bergman, translated from the Swedish by Lars Malmstrom and David Kushner, A Clarion Book, Simon and Schuster, 384 pages.

All Ingmar Bergman's published screenplays must be classified and treated as short novels. They can be read with full effect by someone who has not seen them on the screen. In every instance it is the shooting script that is published, not something concocted after the picture.

For instance, in the film *The Seventh Seal* there is an excellent song about the Devil sung by the husband-wife pair of strolling players Jof and Mia. But it is not in the screenplay. It must have been added during the filming.

For another instance, there is in the published shooting script of *Wild Strawberries* a short scene of the three Jubilee Doctors in a waiting room. It was not used in the film.

In short, the published screenplays and the films are independent artistic creations, though closely related.

As Hollis Alpert said in *Saturday Review*, "Bergman is essentially the artist, as much writer as he is filmmaker."

Second, most of Bergman's published screenplays are provably short *fantasy* novels.

In this clutch of his four greatest, no one would dispute that *The Seventh Seal* is a fantasy. A medieval story in which a Knight plays chess with Death for his life and the lives of those closest to him—what else?

In the romantic comedy *Smiles of a Summer Night* (now also the award-winning musical *A Little Night Music*) the characters drink a rare old magical wine, to every cask of which is added "a drop of milk from the breasts of a woman who has just given birth to her first child and a drop of seed from a young stallion"—whereupon all their love problems are solved. Fantasy surely.

Wild Strawberries is an example

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of a growing *genre* of modern fantasy: the psychological novel in which the events inside the protagonist's mind—dreams and waking memories as powerful as reality—prove to be as strange as the strangest other worlds devised by the fantasy writer.

In all these three fantasies the Moon is the arch-symbol of the supernatural: "Then the moon sails out of the clouds. The forest suddenly becomes alive with the night's unreality. The dazzling light pours through the thick foliage of the beach trees, a moving, quivering world of light and shadow. The wanderers stop. Their faces are pale and unreal in the floating light. It is very quiet." (*The Seventh Seal*) "Over the horizon stood a jagged moon. . . . From behind the foliage the moon shone steadily, like an inflamed eye, and it was as warm as inside a hothouse." (*Wild Strawberries*) "The moon's enormous globe rolls over the horizon, the bullrushes murmur, and once in a while you can hear the voice of the nightjar bird. . . . The moon has risen higher; it drenches the countryside with a mysterious shimmer. The water in the small bay gleams like melted lead; the trees stand quiet and waiting; the tower clock strikes its soft chimes; the yellow pavilion is lit like a jewel." (*Smiles of a Summer Night*)

There you also have three examples of the atmospheric and evocative power of Bergman's simple, spare prose.

In those three shooting scripts, wild strawberries symbolize the warmth of human love, as opposed to the deathly supernatural symbol of the Moon.

In the fourth play in the group, *The Magician (The Face)*, the Moon and wild strawberries become a nocturnal summer thunderstorm and good food enjoyed in the kitchen. But who can fail to class as fantasy a novel in which there is a witch woman with poltergeist and other supernatural powers, a dying actor afflicted with an alcoholic catalepsy so he can simulate death, and this simulation permits a mesmerist to trick a Royal Medical Counselor into dissecting the wrong body and so scaring himself half to death?

These four are not the only published Bergman screenplays which can be classified as fantasy. There is also the trilogy *Through a Glass Darkly, Winter Light*, and *The Silence*, and finally, the recent *Cries and Whispers*, published in the *New Yorker*, October 21, 1972.

No, the stimulatingly gloomy Bergman, preoccupied by the conflict between modern scientific skepticism and a stubborn belief in God, is a fantasy writer of the first water, as well as today's most steadily great filmmaker.

Fantasy and SF Films

Let's take a quick look at imaginative films in general, even though they don't have published shooting scripts which make them also literature.

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The past year has been a fairly rich one here. We have: Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse 5*, a finely etched yet moody science fantasy about a dentist whose abrupt space-time journeys take him back to the horrible, unnecessary, fire-storm bombing of Dresden and forward to a living-dome on a strange, harsh planet where his sole companion is a beautiful girl guide;

Robert Altman's *Images*, starring (she is steadily on camera) the multi-talented Susannah York (an unpublished book of her poems, *In Search of Unicorns*, is used as a running commentary), a supernatural horror story of a woman haunted by her own doubleganger and by real and imagined visions of her husband and two lovers, two of whom she kills. The tale unfolds in an eerily beautiful Irish countryside and takes place in a lovely haunted house, which an inspired sound track brings alive and which is steadily watched by the tiny figure of her doubleganger on a distant cliff;

Harry Harrison's *Soylent Green*, which I have not seen but of which I have had good report, SF tale of overpopulation (based on his *Make Room! Make Room!*) and pollution and an ultimate in syntho diets, though the impact of this is botched by euphemistic cutting;

The Poseidon Adventure, which I have heard to be good.

While we're on the subject, I'm of a mind to list the best dozen science-fiction films of all times; likewise fantasy and also supernatural horror. Doubtless I've missed some good ones, while my classification of many can be argued—I've even put on a TV series. But here goes:

SCIENCE FICTION

2001: A Space Odyssey
The Day the Earth Stood Still
Slaughterhouse 5
Star Trek
Five
Forbidden Planet
Things to Come
Dr. Strangelove
Metropolis
Silent Running
When Worlds Collide
Barbarella

SUPERNATURAL HORROR

The Phantom of the Opera
Dead of Night
Images
Repulsion
The Young and the Damned (Los Olvidados)
The Cat People
The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari
Frankenstein
Diabolique
Eyes Without a Face
The Birds
Dracula

FANTASY

The Seventh Seal
Orpheus
King Kong
Fantasia
The Thief of Bagdad (Douglas Fairbanks)
Beauty and the Beast
Beauties of the Night
The General
Juliet of the Spirits

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Pandora's Box (Louise Brooks)
Wild Strawberries
Kwaidon

Well, there they are. At least I've seen all of them, some many times—and a continuing desire to see a film again was one of my criteria.

Some barely missed getting in—their exclusion was a toss up: *City Lights,* the Veidt *Thief of Bagdad, The Wizard of Oz, The Fearless Vampire Killers, Night Tide, Nightwalker, Psycho, The Assassination Bureau, Miracle in Milan, Topper, Blood and Roses, The Queen of Spades,* and *The Lost World.* I also gave thought to *Last Year at Marienbad, Paris Does Not Exist, Vampyr, Nosferatu, London After Midnight,* and *The Seventh Victim*; but those, alas, I have not seen, or recollect uncertainly.

—FRITZ LEIBER

His Last and First Women (Cont. from page 77)

have been dead before now, mad or not.

"So—" Elissmer stepped out into the sunlight. But she touched Cirnon's arm. "Wait just a moment more. Then you can ride on and forget me—if you can." She looked toward the girl: "Shylda!"

Shylda, still brushing the pome, replied, "Aye, mother?" She looked at them. "Oh, Cirnon, you aren't leaving already?"

But Cirnon didn't hear her last words. Mother! Red rage hissed inside his head and he grabbed Elissmer's shoulders. Her face showed the strength he exerted. "Great Ashmu, Elissmer. She is your daughter—and I—oh, Ashumu! don't you know what we have done?" He threw the woman to the ground. "You Garntol slut, you do know!"

Snarling, he spun blindly about on one foot.

Elissmer said, "Justice is done."

Cirnon cursed all the names of all the southland gods and demons he had known.

Shylda ran across to them, her pome behind her with its horns pointing at the barbarian. "Mother? Cirnon? What is wrong?"

He looked at the girl.

"Don't—don't you know who I am, girl?"

"Of course. You are Cirnon." Her eyes were wide and puzzled. "Mother, what has happened?"

"Justice is done. In the southland, what you have done is scarcely a crime. But here—you have commited the lowest, most repulsive evil that any Tapial-born barbarian could commit. And you are a child of your land, Cirnon. Live with it—ha! Look at his face! Live with it!"

"Mother!?"

BY SUNSET, Cirnon had reached the great mountains of his birth and they echoed with his anguished cry:

"Oh, Ashmu, Earth Mother, What am I? *What am I? —am I?—am I. . .*"

—B. ALAN BURHOE

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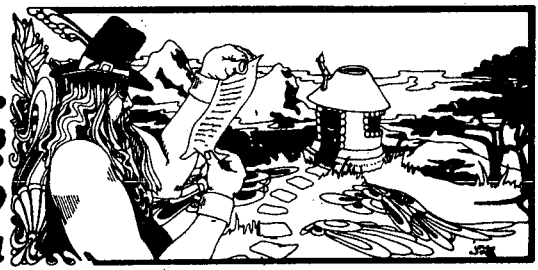
...According to You



Letters intended for publication should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of each sheet, and addressed to According To You, *Box 409, Falls Church, Va., 22046.*

Dear Ted.

The November FANTASTIC is probably the best issue yet—7 short stories and a short novel, and not a bad one in the lot! The cover is the only disappointment. I guess it matches "Junction" and I suppose simplicity of design can be a virtue when you're trying to balance off a large amount of text, but it's just not enough somehow. No doubt it's ambiguous enough not to scare off non-sf readers, if any of those hypothetical, much sought after people happen to be on their knees, in the back of the store, between the comics and the pornography, rummaging through the magazines at the very bottom of the rack, just under *Sexology* and behind 10 or 15 copies of THRILLING SF. The interior art was generally good; I liked the illustrations by Mike Kaluta and Jeff Jones best. Line drawings, which leave mostly white space, seem to be the most successful solution to the problems posed by that thin, one column format. Most other styles tend to look cramped or overly heavy.

As for the stories: Rotsler sure has one hell of a fantasy battle scene there. It makes no sense of course (mixing angels, centaurs, witches—where's the justification?). But them, so what? It's fun. The same goes for the Haldeman piece. There's nothing like pure imagination, unhindered by attempts at psuedo-scientific retionalization. I hope to see more of this kind of thing.

Three Malzberg shorts all at once! If he ever writes enough of them to fill a book, it'll really be something. "A Checklist" was delightful. Watch the great *Analog* delusion warp a short story concept before your very eyes! But he left out one of my pet peeves. Most of the *Analog* stories I've waded through, read as if the author was only too aware of that big 4 cents a word. (Or whatever it is now.) Malzberg throws off enough ideas in 8 pages to fill a whole issue of *Analog*, at least.

The Leiber story was great but too brief. (Now I sound like an *Analog* fan. Oh well. . .) In a genre

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where unintentional parody stalks most writers, it would seem ridiculous for anyone to actively seek parody out and toy with it. But Leiber does, and he gets away with it. I don't know how. (How dare he put that kind of dialogue in the mouths of two lusty adventurers?)

Who is Jim Ross? "A Matter of Time" is one of the best portraits of the would-be artist as a young no-talent that I've read.

"Junction" as promised, was excellent. Most likely I'll give it a second reading. Dann's ideas would seem to invite an overly subjective, obscure and image ridden style, which he avoids—a commendable and (lately) rare bit of good judgement. I don't see how a writer can hope to communicate complex ideas if he makes his reader wrestle with the style as well. Speaking of style, I can't remembering encountering so many odors in a story before.

Then there was the brilliant but somewhat sobering Dozois speech. I think he's right in distinguishing between mainstream and genre SF and I doubt that the two will ever merge. I don't think anyone in the SF community really wants them to. SF can gain a larger audience, but only up to a point. The simple fact of the matter is that the great mass of people (which buys mainstream bestsellers for instance) will never accept anything of intelligence or imagination (except once in a while by accident and for the wrong reasons). I'm afraid we'll just have to grit our teeth while the incompetants like Drury continue to rake in the Big Money. In this day and age the best qualification for financial success seems to be mediocrity.

Which brings me to your editorial. Isn't it odd how the type of people who are quick to denounce the frivolity of fantasy, who pose as realists, very often live in a bizarre fantasy world of their own creation? After all, the struggle between the free world and communism is little more than an updating of the God versus Satan myth. I'm also glad to see someone print an accurate assessment of the public's literacy and responsibility for a change. (The mass media wouldn't dare make such statements) I'm reminded of a quote from H.L. Mencken. "Never underestimate the stupidity of the American public."

Hmmmm. My letter about how much I enjoyed the last FANTASTIC seems to have turned into a diatribe. Must be the times. Maybe I'd better go read a sf book.

ERIC MAYER
RD 1
Falls, Pa., 18615

Dear Mr. White:

Just purchased the Nov. '73 issue of FANTASTIC. It stunk. It was the first time I purchased an issue when a Robert E. Howard or Carter/deCamp story was not present. My *Howard Collector* had not come through the mail yet so I figgured I'd buy a copy of FANTASTIC or *The Magazine of F & SF*. I bought yours because of the Fritz Leiber story. How come on the cover you spell the hero's name

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"Grey" while in the story it is spelled "Gray"? Cele Goldsmith did the same thing. Other than that the story was darn good.

The other fiction in the magazine left something to be desired, but more on that later. I would like to know why you don't print some old stories by the great Robert E. Howard. I know some people do not like reprints, but I think they are a helluva lot better than crap like "Junction"! Some might enjoy stories like "Junction" written by some nut who gets his jollies by mentioning squeezing whores tits every page, but thank God, I'm not one of them. That story belonged in the dung heap he kept mentioning throughout the story! A good ole Robert Howard reprint would have been a lot better. If you refuse to reprint, at least get some good fantasy writers to write for you. This SF (shit fiction) is starting to get to me. God bless Robert E. Howard and eternal hell for Hugo Gernsback.

Your magazine advertises fantasy, but all we get is the aforementioned SF. If you must have science-fiction, why don't you rpint some good stories. The ones about how Captain Nucleus beat a half-dozen BEM's for breakfast and saved Neptune and Venus for lunch and dinner. I like that kind of SF.

I did like other things about the Nov. issue beside the Mouser story. I enjoyed the letter column and read the editorial with pleasure. I do not agree with what you said about Nixon, but I like the way you said it. You're a darn good writer.

My parting words: Bring back the days of Howard, either by reprint or new stuff by his imitators. His good imitators, I might add. The Panshin's Sword & Sorcery shlocker "Black Morca" was just another SF piece of crap. I do not enjoy reading about how somebody had to piss so bad it hurt. (July '73, p. 76) Before I forget; If this letter is printed, I'll feel obligated to buy the issue so please put some fantasy into it; and how about bringing back Ova Hamlet, God knows stuff like "Junction" needs satirizing.

GARY ROMEO
4228 Fourth
Detroit, Mich., 48201

It's letters like yours, Gary, that cheer up my whole day. –TW

Dear Ted,

I very much enjoyed your editorial in the November FANTASTIC, and I agreed with every basic point and almost every supporting point you made. I've been saying those same things for years, but of course it never did any real good, just like your editorial probably won't do much good, because the great majority of Americans *do* believe in order without law to enforce their idea of what America and the world should be. And visions of themselves seen in an honest mirror like your editorial won't change too many minds. The "America first"-ers would undoubtedly call you a pinko or a dupe of the Communist-liberal conspiracy. But

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this may be slowly changing, not because of attacks on the myth by you or any of the "Communist-liberal" commentators and columnists, but by the full horror of the "Watergate" affair itself brought into every American home on daily television. Yes, writers of letters to the editor who argue that the only crime committed was to find evidence of the "Russian and Chinese" money that they say was financing the McGovern campaign and that that crime was justified because the most important thing is to prevent this country's takeover by the dirty Commies abound in every newspaper. But polls show that if the last election were held over again, in the light of what's now been proven about the Nixon political sabotage and espionage activities, McGovern would win with 51% of the vote to Nixon's 49%. Chose! But a big change from the landslide great silent majority vote of confidence Nixon got in November.

Anyway what I really want to say about your editorial concerns a minor point of disagreement. True, a lot of the popular fiction of the past two decades has been the James Bond/Mickey Spillane type. And watching reruns of the ten year old *Untouchables* series now being shown on local tv here I find it very difficult to tell the good guys from the bad guys. But I think that the reason *The Untouchables* and other similar stuff appears so repugnant upon going back to it today is that the climate of the country has changed in the last decade, slowly, minisculely, and subtly, but it has changed. Civil rights is now a big issue, like it couldn't have been twenty years ago. And while some fiction series of the James Bond type, notably *Dick Tracey*, have remained to this very day loudspeakers for no-matter-the-means let's-get-the-bad-guys propaganda, others have changed.

Yes, the whole point of this is to defend two characters you attacked in your editorial, Superman and Batman. Actually I don't think Batman ever went outside the law, although your knowledge of the *Batman* stories of the prewar and war years may be more extensive than mine. The one time Batman used a gun, in self defense, it caused DC to institute a code for its own mags which made sure that civil rights were honored and respected in all its stories, etc., actually much the same kind of code you so strongly disapprove of in the industry as a whole for some strange reason. And while Superman, yes, did certainly force confessions from criminals in his early days, this is no longer true. And you'll find today's Superman refusing even to cross a street against a traffic light. And a lot of graphic mag fans, under the banner of "freedom of the press," decry the comics code and the publishers and editors who enact even stricter codes for their own companies, because, as you said in a reply to one of my previous letters in FANTASTIC, the restrictions produce

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unrealistic stories in which the good guys always win in often forced happy endings. But it's these codes that removed the James Bond type heroes and the EC type glorification of crime from the graphic mags, which are still read mainly by impressionable youngters. In this editorial you seem to have come around 180 degrees on the basic point, although I don't know if you've changed your position on the comics code accordingly. Anyway I just wanted to defend the *current* Superman and Batman, which are as far removed from the James Bond myth as anything can be, because the times—and magazine publishers and editors—*have* been changing.

Incidentally I share your view that fiction is or at least should be first and foremost escapism. That's why I read science fiction, graphic mags, and the little other fiction I read outside those two fields. And apparantly *most* people agree, because the Green Lantern series, still alive in the back of the *Flash* magazine, is now completely devoid of the soap box relevance of the Green Lantern/Green Arrow days. And a good thing, too!

As far as the fiction went this issue, "Junction" was spoiled for me by the lack of fixed rules governing the internal workings of Dann's surreal world, I didn't find "Chang Bhang" funny (I think Jay Haldeman's better off doing the kind of science fiction that gets included in AMAZING), and I thought "Matter of Time" boring and unoriginal. "Dear Ted" was a much better rendering of basically the same theme. Lionel Hayden was a bore, and the story, told from his point of view, couldn't help being boring. "Trapped in the Shadowland," of course, was excellent, as are all Fafhrd and The Gray Mouser tales. And "Triptych," while reading like the worst of Vonnegut and containing some prejudices I don't share, was imaginative, fascinating, and witty to a very high degree. Er, you could almost say it invoked a real sense of wonder.

Gardner Dozois's speech was good, although I note that Lloyd Biggle *didn't* seem to believe that the mainstream's current disasterous delight with science fiction is here to stay, although he bemoaned academia's playing with sf as Dozois bemoaned literature's playing with it, in his speech at the Nebula Awards banquet in New Orleans in April. *Is* the current mainstream-sf clash a permanent thing? Gee, I hope not. The scorn and ridicule are now buried in the past, and we can do without all the other "benefits" the meeting has brought us. We can do *very* well without it, in fact.

LESTER BOUTILLIER
2726 Castiglione Street
New Orleans, La., 70119

I think you've fundamentally misunderstood me, Lester, if you think my "Watergate editorial" was a plea for censorship–such as that of the Comics Code Authority in the days when it had muscles. No, I think

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fiction of all sorts should be free to portray anything its authors like. What bothers me is the confusion of appreciation of the differences between fiction and reality shown by our nation's administration. I enjoy *Donal Hamilton's Matt Helm suspense novels, primarily for their ruthlessness. But when an employee of the White House takes a voiced complaint about columnist Jack Anderson as a command to assassinate the man, we are dealing with a type of person incapable of separating fictional melodrama from reality. In simple terms, the Nixon administration has exhibited classic symptoms of paranoic schizophrenia–insanity. As I write this, a number of public figures have begun openly expressing concern about the state of Nixon's sanity, and are questioning his fitness to remain in office. I find some hope in the possibility that by the time you read this Richard M. Nixon and all he stands for may no longer occupy the White House. Moving along to other matters, I must note that Jack C. Haldeman II's story in our November issue was misspelled on both the title page and contents page (it was correctly spelled on the cover). The correct title is "Ghang Bhang," of course.* –TW

Dear Ted,

I found the Gardner Dozois article/speech enlightening on some points, as the Panshins' column had touched on possibly a year ago. Having read *The Throne of Saturn*, I can agree it belongs with the Space Operas of pre-World War II. (Tho, there's been a recent series in a competitive magazine that's based itself on similar faulty lines; e.g., that the space program has such an inefficient psychologic program that they can only get unbalanced persons in space. There have been a few pranks played by the astronauts, but I cannot see the government allowing a crew such as Drury wrote about off the ground, or, as Ernest Taves has written, a group that once off-planet goes its own way. The only one I've really appreciated reading this sort of story is Malzberg, and that's his regular way of writing.)

I cannot see the mainstream totally consuming the SF genre, as most authors refuse to get that far afield. The Vonneguts can pull off the fence-straddling, but the Susanns and Wallaces will continue to write 'today' fiction, which just happens to have in its world trips to the moon and new developments in medicine.

If anything, the new writers will be natural hybrids between the two schools, so no one can truly say what they're writing.

A comment in the lettercol about Pynchton being a successer to Hemingway and Faulkner couldn't escape my attention, esp. as I'm reading his *Gravity's Rainbow* presently. I'd like to think there are better writers than that to replace the Nobel prize winners we've had, or America won't be seeing a Nobel Literature prize winner for quite a

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while. Clear writing is never achieved by the way Pynchton's going about it. An Updike writes clearer, and I can't see him on scale with an Hemingway. (I only realized recently that I haven't read any books by these authors more recent than the '40's, so am basing my opinions on their earlier works.)

As regards *The Son of Black Morca*. I at first wasn't going to write anything, but rereading my letter made me remember I was planning on commenting anyway. Now, a month or so after reading it, I am still spinning as regards the quality of the fiction.

It jumped at points, but had logicality for it in that magick was going on. The use of certain myths I can't immediately recognize was handled superbly, and I recognize certain Crowley effects in such scenes as the passage thru the Abyss.

If all sword & sorcery was like this, it would be a superior fiction to science fiction.

(Also, I recognized some Scientological ideas in the story, but don't know if the authors were aware of their being such; as they have a tendency of being universals. I'm still spinning, in a different direction, from my contact a couple years ago with one of their Orgs; so have a sensitivity to these things.

(But, the Panshins' use of the reality frame for the confusion of the SoBM in the pheasant's hut, for instqnce, was totally credible as far as the story went. Something like that sliver of steel finishing off the adversary near the end.)

By the bye, what's you think of Simak's use of Falls Church as a setting in his recent novel?

ROY J. SCHENCK
R.D. #1
Canisteo, N.Y., 14823

Dear Ted,

Reading David Williams' letter (FANTASTIC, Nov.), I found myself not entirely at ease with his consideration of the "adolescent" attraction of SF. Let me say that, having no scholarship in the Panshins' criticism, I take no issue with Williams' remarks on its quality. However, I *do* wish to address myself to certain notions of "maturity" and "juvenility" which were expressed.

By rejecting the "negative connotations" of juvenility, Williams may have bent over backward too far—by effectively posing a case for the existence of positive connotations. One can measure the merit of children, adolescents, adults, and whatever, on only one kind of spectrum: rationality and experience. To the extent that one acquires these attributes in greater proportion, that person may be said to be maturing. The coincidence with chronological age is only that: a coincidence. There can be no doubt that one should seek to become adult, in this sense.

Williams confuses the "act of exploration" for growth of the mind. He claims that the pattern of exploration and testing is a process which continues in man long after it

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ceases in other species. This is not true, for the self-exploratory and sensory patterns he refers to are related to the animal *learning how to operate and understand its own body*. In animals, and in men, this phase passes relatively quickly. What Williams was trying to describe was the process of *conceptualization*, which is unique to man and continues indefinitely into adult life.

The point to be made, though, is that this process of conceptual knowledge-acquisition is exactly what *causes* man to mature, if he does so at all. (Since the workings of the mind are largely volitional, it is possible for a person to *choose* growth or stagnation.)

From the context of Williams' letter, it seems that the Panshins advocate SF that will stimulate and facilitate this mental growth, this expansion of awareness and wisdom. If this is so, it is inappropriate to describe this quality as "juvenile" when it so clearly implies increased maturity on the part of writer and reader alike.

I mean no criticism of children; we were all members of that oppressed class of human beings. Still, let us recognize that childhood is an initial state of ignorance and unawareness from which we must all arise, if our lives are to become even more purposeful and exciting.

MIKE DUNN
5600 University Way NE, Apt. 8
Seattle, Wa., 98105

Ted—

Would anyone feel a compulsion to tear me into little bits if I admitted to liking a small piece of indescribably funny comic-book "sf" called *E-Man*?

I'm relatively new to magazine science fiction. For years, I read dustcovers and endpapers and intros on library copies of Asimov and Heinlein, and wondered what ever happened to those pulps whose names I found: *Astounding*, AMAZING, *Galaxy*.

When I first got into organized comics fandom, they *told* me what happened to the pulps. *Ah, well,* I thought, *kay-surrah-surrah. No use crying over spilled ink*, and promptly forgot about the whole matter.

What nobody had ever thought to tell me was that there were still sf *magazines* around, and only the format (and price) had changed. It came as a shock, then, to come across a February copy of FANTASTIC last February (the coincidence in dates was a shock in itself), especially after my fannish friends had assured me that the pulps were dead. In the months immediately following, more shocks: many talented new people, many different new kinds of stories.

In a few months, my entire view of science fiction and fantasy had changed radically. Right now, I only wish I could work that same kind of radical change on the fans and pros of comics fandom.

It seems that when most comics fans and pros think of sf, they get

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visions of the pulps, space-operas with a modified *Buck Rogers* theme. Admittedly, this type of idea is the easiest kind of "science fiction" to adapt, and the only kind of story that sells comic books under an sf banner. Over the course of 40 years, this theme has been twisted, varied, and distorted—and has produced a very few comic books worthy of the name *science fiction*, along with a great many other items that don't deserve any name at all.

At first glance, *E-Man* appears to be one of the nameless hordes. The plot is clichéd and comic-book-y: After a nova, a part of the exploded star is endowed with intelligence. It drifts, searching for some other form of intelligent life, until it comes across a typical alien menace from Alpha Centauri, which wants to test a powerful new weapon on Pluto. (Why the alien shies away from Earth, where all the other comic-book menaces seem to be attracted, is a bit unclear.)

The "Intelligent energy" is confused by the alien's rhetoric (which is delivered over loudspeakers to the robot crew), so he/it transforms him/itself into matter, duplicating one of the robots. (Fortunately, he is not yet aware that $E=mc^2$ would limit his mass to a very low amount.) The extra weight on board confuses the alien (apparently a giant brain under glass), who helplessly crashes on Earth. . . .

By this time, any reader of the story who has any respect for decent science fiction has gone for a Bromo. That's if he hasn't caught something else in reading between panels: an almost-satirical inanity. The intelligent energy, after all, lacks the standard, ready-made heroism; in fact, it's almost child-like. "The Brain!" it exclaims when it first sees the alien. "*Wow!*" The juvenility of the hero, the helplessness of the alien menace as his starship goes off course, the generally ridiculous design of the story. . . .all these things come together in the reader's mind, if it is receptive, to form something that is so highly "camp" that it's *beyond* camp: this is satire of a fine sort, a satirical view of mass-medium science fiction.

There's no doubt in my mind that kids will love this comic book. It's designed for a very young audience, an audience that won't know any better than to like it. But a few, more sophistocated and mature, readers will also read it—and see that it is both more and less than it claims to be—and enjoy it, not in spite of its "badness", but because of it.

After reading Michael Girsdansky's fulminations upon watching *Genesis II*, I'm beginning to wonder if writer Nicola Cuti and artist Joe Staton haven't sniffed out the route of mass-medium sf for the future in *E-Man*. It's aimed low, after all, and it'll undoubtedly make it with the audience for which it's intended. Little kids, paging through each issue, might even be thinking, *Wow! I watch* Star Trek *cartoons and read* E-Man *comics—I'm really serious about*

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science fiction! Gosh-wowie!, echoing the acclaim—and awe, maybe—that always seems to issue from any audience when *Star Trek* or *Genesis II* or *(fill in blank) Of the Planet Of The Apes* flashes on a screen.

E-Man has an advantage over, say, *Genesis II*, thought; it's nontoxic. It can't cause sf fans to scream, rant, rave or convulse. It's a supercampy kind of nonsense, and it probably wouldn't do the sf world any good, but at least it wouldn't vex and tax the rationality of people who care about good sf as it entertained the multitudes of the general public.

After all, science fiction will no longer be chic in a few years; when people once again forget about it, they'll turn to something else, and *that's* what you'll see on your tv screen. Right now, the rage seems to be 60- and 90-minute detectives, and a good many mystery fans are unhappy with the situation as Mr. Girsdansky was over *G-II*. While science fiction *is* popular with the mass media, though, I (for one) would rather see something I could laugh about (rather than ulcerate over) while my friends and family are oohing and ahhing.

E-Man may well be the sf comic book of the future. I hope so; at least it'd be better than the quasi-sf television shows, comic books, movies, etc. which insist on appearing from time to time.

FRANK J. HAYES, III
Hayes House
1111-11th Street
Moline, Il., 61265

E-Man's artist is the same Joe Staton whose work appears regularly in these pages and on the cover of our September, 1973, issue. . . –TW

Ted,

I was extremely aggrieved to read your editorial in the September issue. Mr. Girsdansky takes a very critical view of *Genesis II* and obviously did not look beneath the surface. Nevertheless, (and this will no doubt seem paradoxical) some of his observations are undeniably valid. My personnal opinion is that *Genesis II* represents the struggles of several differents bands of humans attempting to retrieve the level of modern civilized(?) man. But as is pointed out, Pax can be nowhere as 'liberated' as they wish you to think. Pax is by no means as peaceful as they want you to think either. The main point about Pax is that it is an experimental society, a form of paradise (utopian socialist of course). Pax, however, is a fallacy. As Girsdansky says, a society as peaceful as Pax supposedly is would not have teams of saboteurs infiltrating other cities unless (ahhah) they have a paranoid fear that the other cities would try to undermine their security. One thing that bothers me is that question of what kind of peace are they trying to establish? A truly democratic peace or a Nortonesque peace, see two books by Andre Norton: *The Stars Are Ours* and *The Last Planet*. In the former it is an enforced peace and in the second it is a peace without

(Cont. on page 128)

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local library; it will reward your reading.

NEW TYPOGRAPHY: In our November, 1973, issue I remarked upon the fact that our typesetter would no longer honor our contract for the type sizes we had been using, and the change in both that issue and our last issue (set entirely in 10 point type) was a result of this, as well as a hefty increase in the cost of typesetting.

As I explained then, the loss of wordage per issue, due to the use of a larger size of type, was absorbed entirely by the non-fiction—the features, such as this editorial, the articles, book reviews and letters. Predictably, some of you complained—many of you have come to regard our unique feature material as an important facet of this magazine, equal in ranking to the fiction.

This issue we've gone to a new typesetter, one which will (I hope) prove more suitable to our needs. I have yet, of course, to see how this issue will turn out, but I hope it will compare favorably with our earlier issues in terms of both attractive type and greater wordage.

SPEAKING OF FEATURES, we're publishing this issue an article by Brian Stableford, "Science Fiction: A Sociological Perspective," which exemplifies, I think, the unique value of our non-fiction. In an accompanying letter, Brian states:

"I have followed with interest the long series of FANTASTIC articles, *SF in Dimension*, by Alexei and Cory Panshin. I was impressed by the intelligence of his criticism, but I couldn't help feeling that he seemed to be missing the point (I say "he" because much of what I took mild exception to was credited to Alexei before Cory was added to the byline)." (Editorial interjection: Cory's contribution to the column began some time before her name was added to it, so, in the interests of consistency, I have changed Brian's references to "he" and "Alexei Panshin" to "they" and "Alexei & Cory Panshin" throughout his article.)

"My article is not in any way a counterblast to Panshin, but it does affer a totally different point of view. I am currently preparing a book on *The Sociology of Science Fiction*, which I hope will eventually see publication as well as being presented as a higher degree thesis to the University of York. The piece is a sketch of some of the ideas which will be in the book. I hope you find it interesting, and that you might see your way clear to printing it in one of your magazines. (You're the only person using any real SF criticism in the mags these days, so you're probably the only hope I have of getting some advance material out on the professional scene.)"

I'm very pleased that FANTASTIC has generated the sort of atmosphere with the publication of the Panshins' *SF in Dimension* and such subsequent articles as Gardner Dozois's "Mainstream SF & Genre

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SF'' which has led to the unsolicited submission of his article by Brian Stableford. As much as any of you I have regretted the conclusion of the Panshins' columns; that they have established a momentum which is responsible for the Stableford article this issue and, I hope, many more works of ''real SF criticism'' in the months to come is a tribute to their own dedication.

When last I visited the Panshins (October, 1973) they pointed to a manuscript which was quite a few inches thick, and then said, ''We're back to page five again.'' They were referring to their monumental work for Scribners, *The World Beyond the Hill,* for which their FANTASTIC columns served as notes and early drafts.

The book has evolved over a period of half a decade, now, and resembles its origins very little. As their work on the book has progressed it has led to them many revisions of their own thinking, and, thus, much redrafting. A point which I think should be kept in mind in reading (or rereading) their columns here is that these columns were not conceived as a single unit. Originally they were to be a serialization, with revision, of the original book, written by Alexei in the latter half of the sixties. Very quickly it became apparent that this would not do—that Alexei's ideas had changed and matured greatly since then. Early instalments of the column, then, represented the ferment of new ideas as yet not fully conceived. Later columns began presenting the structural underpinnings of the new book, in draft form. But more than once the Panshins have been forced by their own explorations to rethink their premises, to go back and start afresh. Thus, to look for an overall consistency in the columns published here is to miss the point of their efforts. And the columns will only hint at the book, *The World Beyond the Hill.*

Last spring (1973) Alexei showed me an article he had written. It ran over a hundred pages, in manuscript form—the length of a novella or short novel, in fact. It was written as a ''breather'' from the book. It was a ''pre-review'' of Heinlein's as then yet-unpublished (but rumored) novel, *Time Enough for Love*. It reviewed Heinlein's career as a writer and predicted with uncomfortable accuracy the nature of his (then) forthcoming book. It was in every respect superior to Alexei's *Heinlein in Dimension*. It was offered to Ben Bova for *Analog*; Bova reportedly stated that his readers were not yet ready for anything like it. I would have liked very much to publish it here, but two factors interferred: timing (it was important that the article appear *soon*, concurrent, if possible, with the publication of Heinlein's book, since later publication might reduce it to the status of Monday-morning-quarterbacking) and length (there was no way I could publish it in a single issue, and Alexei did not want it broken into serialized form, objecting that it was too much a single, cohesive unit). Ultimately

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Tom Collins accepted it for *Is*, a semi-professional magazine. (Copies of *Is* are available from Collins at 4305 Balcones Dr., Austin, Texas, 78731; write to him for particulars and cost of the issue including the Panshin article.) As of this writing (late 1973), that issue of *Is* has yet to appear, although scheduled for July.

If the Heinlein article is any indication of the nature of *The World Beyond the Hill*, that book will be an epochal event in the science fiction world.

In the meantime, however, it should be pointed out that in science fiction, as in most things, there are many divergent attitudes and points of view. It is our purpose here to present you with as many of these points to view as we can, in the hope that you will find the insights in each to be of value to you in your own appreciation of the genre (if indeed it can still be called that).

It has always seemed to me that a science fiction (or fantasy) magazine has a greater duty than the publication of fiction. These days the libraries and newsstands are overflowing with anthologies of fiction (both sf and fantasy), some collections of previously published stories and many new and previously unpublished. But what leaves all too many of these story collections only grey blurs in the memories of their readers is the lack of any explanatory material. Even those anthologies which contain forewords or introductions rarely say much about the nature of the fiction presented—forewords have in recent years become glib bits of puffery often written by someone with little interest (or involvement) in the actual volume of stories; introductions consist too often of brief blurbs, differing little from those published in magazines. I've said it before and may say it yet again: a large element of the impact of *Dangerous Visions* and its sequel was the obvious—indeed, overwhelming—involvement in the book of its editor and authors.

FANTASTIC (and her sister magazine, AMAZING SF) is concerned not only with the fiction it publishes, but with the *nature* of that fiction. The reviews, articles and letters published here serve to underline that concern. I feel it to be a shame that more opportunities do not exist for the publication in professional print of articles like Brian Stableford's. But I'm glad the opportunity does exist—and was taken advantage of—here.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH: Speaking of Harlan Ellison, the editor of *Dangerous Visions*—and speaking also of the nature of science fiction—leads me to a brief note which turned up in *TV Channels*, a Sunday suppliment to the Washington *Post*, by one Lawrence Laurent:

"Harlan Ellison, the most honored of all the writers of speculative fiction, is the creator of the syndicated television series called *The Starlost*. He's not happy about it. He calls the movement of his con-

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cept from script to video tape, 'the single most heartbreaking experience of my 12 years in television.'

"Ellison's books have sold more widely than any other writer in the field that used to be called 'science fiction.' (The old term, according to Ellison, is now considered 'pejorative.') . . ."

It's hard to know, of course, how much was lost in translation between Ellison and his interviewer (the remainder of the interview deals with Ellison's decision to remove his name from *The Starlost*), but while it may be true that, in terms of Hugo and Nebula awards for his works, Harlan is "the most honored of all writers of speculative fiction," I'm sceptical about the claim that his books have sold more widely than those of anyone else in the field (how about Heinlein, Clarke, Asimov and Silverberg, for openers?), and it was news to me that the term "science fiction" was an "old term" and "now considered 'perjorative.' "

Food for thought—and I'll let you ruminate on this until next issue.

—TED WHITE

Letters (Cont. from page 124)

any so-called disruptive influences. Both are a pile of shit because neither one can survive. Or would it be more of a peace set down in *Stranger in a Strange Land* by Heinlein? Racial prejudiced obviously still exist though it is not open in Pax. No halfbreeds, just pureblooded members of each race presented. The open hatred is directed at the mutants. Have not mutants always been portrayed as menacing except in the *X-Men*? Thusly, wouldn't they be the prime victoms of racism? One thing that has remained stable in human history has been fear and hatred of anything different. The question of whether or not it would be more fun to make love with a mutant is ridiculous. Whereas *Trek* should have remained adventure etc. *GII* should be straight social commentary which, so far, it is not. If anything what I have written so far agrees with Girsdansky's points. My main disagreement with him is that he should take so negative a view as to bias him against the whole series. Definitely there is much room for improvement and if Roddenberry wishes to make a pile out of this series he will also realize it and make the major changes.

I am getting rather nauseated by Mr. Boutilliers' weak complaints about nudity. Nudity at any affair is a matter of personal preferance and should be acceptable unless it detacts from the affair. I hope we do not suffer through his whining platitudes for a while. You can be sure there has been dope, sex and nudity involved at the comiccons. Some of the most valuable exhibits have been ones in which dope, sex, and nudity have been exhibited. Apparently this did not take anything away from the cons; they were quite exciting and successful.

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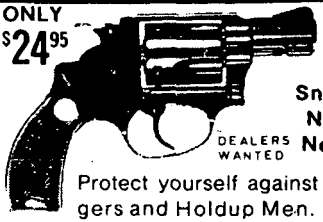

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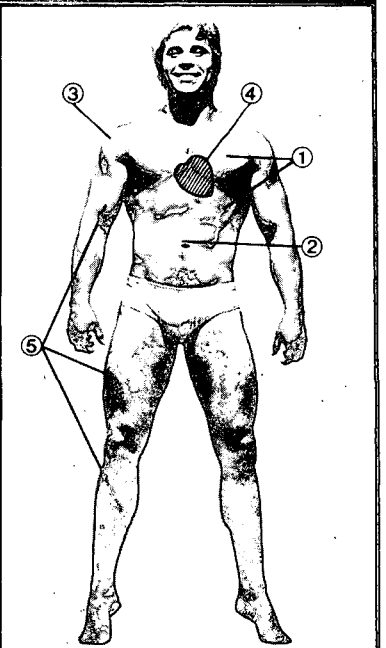

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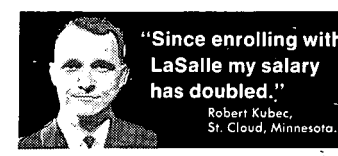

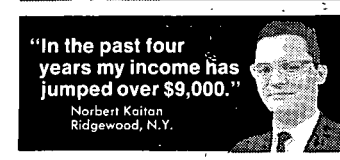

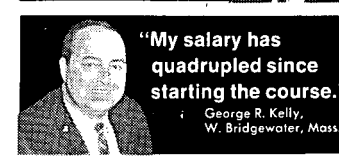

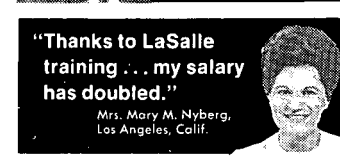

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